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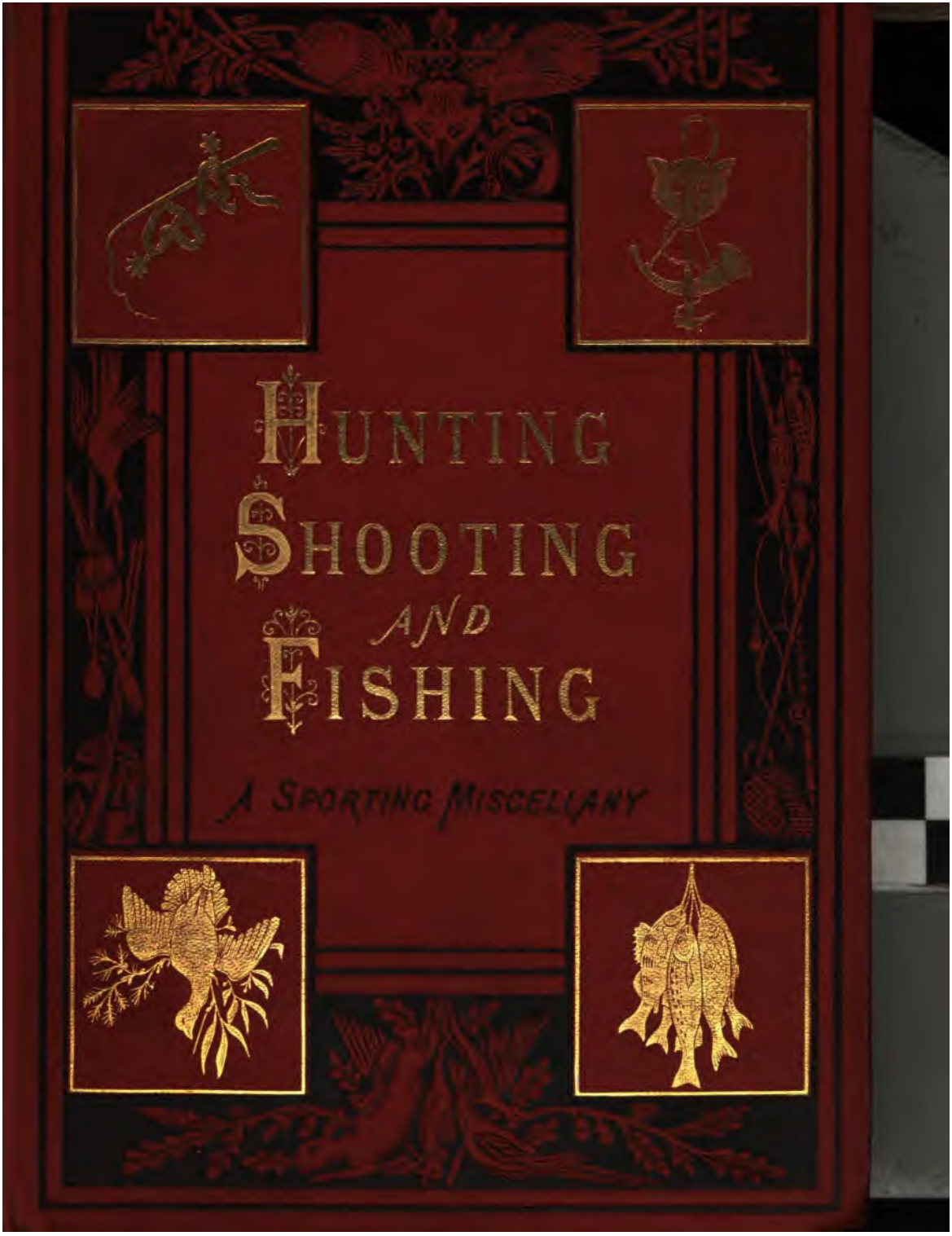
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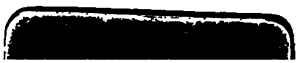
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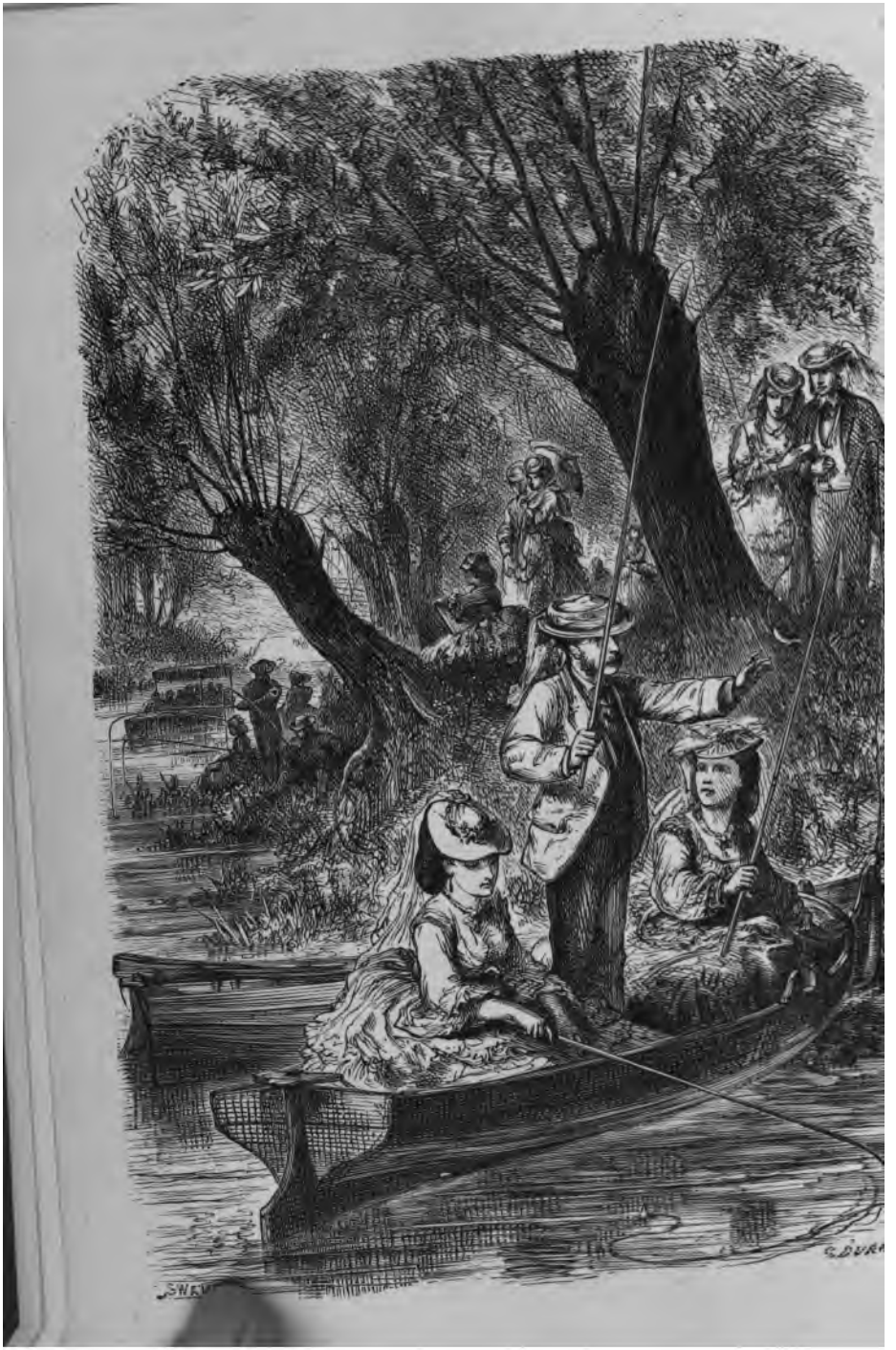
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HUNTING
SHOOTING
AND
FISHING
A SPORTING MISCELLANY


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HUNTING, SHOOTING,

AND

FISHING:

A SPORTING MISCELLANY.

WITH

ANECDOTIC CHAPTERS ABOUT HORSES AND DOGS.



Numerous Illustrations.

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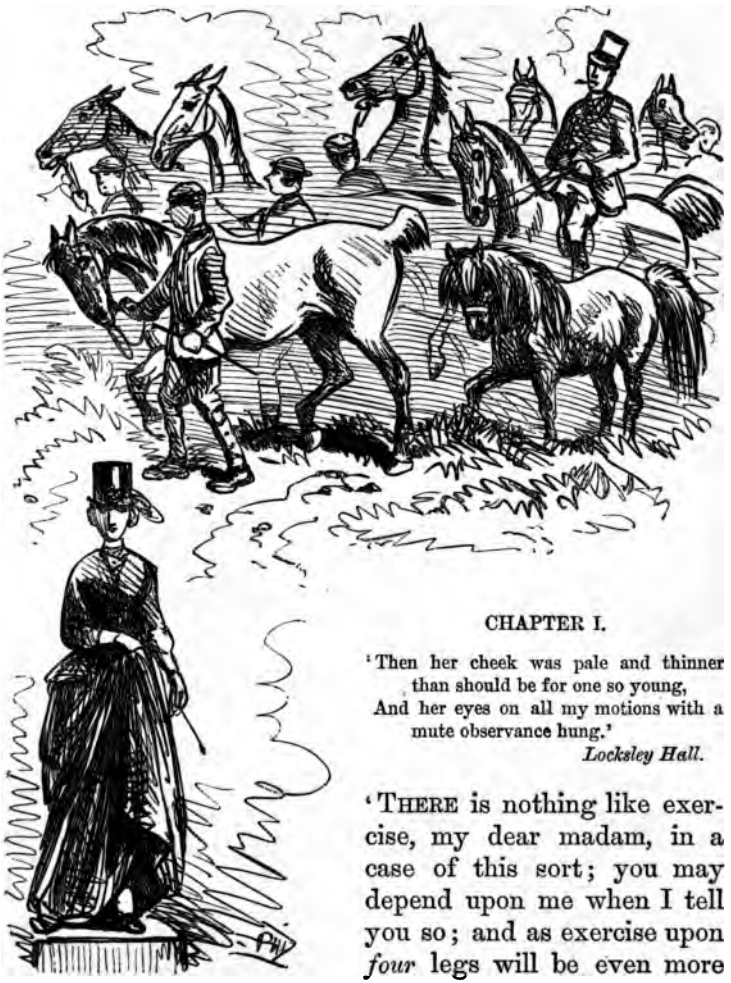
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THE ADVENTURES OF A LADY IN SEARCH OF A HORSE.



CHAPTER I.

'Then her cheek was pale and thinner
than should be for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a
mute observance hung.'
Locksley Hall.

'THERE is nothing like exercise, my dear madam, in a case of this sort; you may depend upon me when I tell you so; and as exercise upon *four* legs will be even more

advantageous than exercise upon two, you must get a horse for your daughter, and let her ride as much as she can: provided always that she is not afraid. Eh, my dear?'

This last query was directed by Sir Erasmus Globule, the fashionable physician of the day, to his youthful patient Miss Gloriana Applegarde, who had been brought to him for advice, in one of those difficult cases in which general decline of bodily health takes place, without any ostensible or tangible cause. It had baffled the attempts of the country practitioner utterly to arrest, or even to understand it; and it was indeed at his recommendation that the shrewd and affable doctor (who had earned a world-wide fame more from quickness and penetration than from any deep learning or research) had been at last consulted by the anxious mother on her daughter's account.

Under his sunshiny influence the most desponding patient would become cheerful and reassured; and in the case in question it was evident that he had hit upon a remedy acceptable to the invalid, for her pale cheek flushed, and her slender frame trembled with eagerness, as she replied, 'Afraid! oh no, indeed, Sir Erasmus; I have always had a passion for horses, although I have never had the opportunity of riding. I should like it better than anything in the world.'

It was, indeed, just as she said. As a child she had read of horses, dreamt of horses, and loved horses in that reckless impassioned sort of way in which little girls are supposed to love only dolls or kittens; as she had grown older, she never formed in imagination a tale or a romance, in which a horse was not the principal hero, the biped being on every occasion entirely subordinate to the glorified quadruped. She had never found any difficulty in learning by heart any piece, prose or poetical, which treated of the all-engrossing subject; she had wept with James Fitz-James over the fate of the gallant horse that

lay a-dying in the Highland glen, and believed that nothing in poetry equalled the pathos of the lines—

'Then, touched with pity and remorse,
He sorrowed o'er the expiring horse;
"I little thought when first thy rein
I slacked upon the banks of Seine,
That Highland eagle e'er should feed
On thy fleet limbs, my matchless steed.
Woe worth the chase! woe worth the day!
That cost thy life, my gallant gray;"'

or the majesty of those in 'The Battle of the Lake Regillus,' describing the noble grief of him who was 'the fleetest steed from Aufidus to Po:'

'But like a graven image
Black Auster kept his place,
And ever wistfully he looked
Into his master's face.
The raven-mane that daily,
With pats and fond caresses,
The young Herminia washed and combed,
And twined in even tresses,
And decked with coloured ribands
From her own gay attire,
Hung sadly o'er her father's corpse,
In carnage and in mire;'

or the graphic force of those in the Spanish ballad, when the Cid displays his peerless charger, in the sight of the king and the courtiers, saying—

'But that your Majesty may see him,
And know him to the core,
I'll make him go as he was wont
When his nostrils smelt the Moor.'

After which gallant display of horsemanship, the science of the Cid is put to the last test, by the breaking of the bridle, when, equal to the occasion, in sight of the wondering crowd, he is seen 'proudly ruling' the fiery steed, 'with the fragment of his rein.'

Although the penetrating eye of Sir Erasmus Globule, aided by his wide experience, could hardly have enabled him to ascertain all this at a glance, it had enabled him,

metaphorically speaking, to put his finger at once upon the seat of disease. Some employment or amusement, which would act as a counterbalance to the mind subject to a brooding and overwhelming thought; some healthful exercise calculated to restore energy and buoyancy to the drooping frame: this was what experience told him was necessary for the recovery of his patient; and such employment and such amusement, experience had also told him, were more often productive of good results, when obtained through the agency of the 'four legs' (whose good offices we heard him bespeak, in his facetious and amiably patronising way, in the beginning of this chapter), than by the unassisted efforts of only two. Miss Applegarde's passion for horses, which had never before been in the way of being indulged, made the simple prescription of the great man, in this particular instance, one of his luckiest hits.

Had he not been the most reserved, as well as the most acute of men, he would naturally have questioned so tender a mother as Mrs. Applegarde, as to her daughter's tone of mind, and the circumstances into which she had been thrown; but he trusted to his own instinctive perception; and in that instance, as in most of those which came under his observation, he did not trust in vain. Never was guinea fee more easily, and at the same time more deservedly earned; and before the sound of the wheels of his brougham had died away, and mingled with the rumble of the distant streets, Mrs. Applegarde exclaimed, with enthusiasm, 'I am so glad, really, that we came to town; we never *should* have thought of your riding, should we, my dear?'

'I daresay not, mamma,' said Gloriana; 'but,' she added, with a spark of the old animation in look and voice, 'I like the idea very much, now that it is put into my head for me, as a thing that *can* be done. I have no doubt that I should have thought of it long ago, if it had only

seemed to be in the least practicable. As it is, I cannot exactly see how it is to be managed.'

'I confess that I foresee a difficulty in the matter of procuring the animal,' Mrs. Applegarde remarked deliberately, while a smile, tender, but rallying, played about her daughter's lips, as she answered—

'It is indeed that first difficulty of "catching your horse" which appears to me almost insurmountable: there will be no difficulty about the riding part of it, for that has been my day-dream all my life. We have no one to take into our council but Wells; and I do not suppose that he is much of a judge of horses, even should he be willing to help us, which I think more than doubtful.'

Gloriana had not uttered so many consecutive sentences, or appeared so much interested upon any subject, since her insidious illness had been gradually but surely gaining ground upon her life, which circumstance Mrs. Applegarde noted with delighted surprise, as she replied, 'I had no idea, my dear child, that you would have cared so much about it, or I would have procured you a horse long ago. But, to tell you the truth, such an event as your taking to riding never entered my head; and, with no gentleman to manage anything for us, there must always have been some little difficulty in the matter. Now that riding is ordered for you, however, by Sir Erasmus, for your health, it is a very different thing; and, in spite of difficulties, in whatever shape or form they present themselves, the thing must be done.'

It will be necessary here to explain, how it came to pass that so lovely a girl as Gloriana herself, and so elegant and attractive a woman as her widowed mother, should have to appear upon the list of 'unprotected females,' whose difficulties and dilemmas in the great battle of life have afforded a rich vein of amusement for those lovers of the grotesque and the incongruous, who are still chivalric enough to feel that there is a reproach to the

male public, conveyed in the words themselves: that it should be possible for a 'female' to be made conscious of her unprotected state, when thrown upon the mercy of society in an advanced stage of civilisation, is, we presume, the incongruity which excites the risible muscles of the stronger sex.

Hoping that it is so, I hasten to acquit the men of Mrs. Applegarde's acquaintance, and those honoured also by relationship to the fair widow and her daughters, from the reproach of want of taste, or want of feeling, which any backwardness on their part might well seem to imply. Mrs. Applegarde's isolated position in the world, had been entirely the result of her own self-chosen line of action. Naturally of a timid and retiring disposition, the great grief into which she had been plunged by the early loss of her husband, had given her an absolute distaste to society of any kind, with the exception of that of her two orphan children, Gloriana and her sister Katherine (commonly called Kate), in whom every thought of her heart was centred. She had withdrawn herself so entirely from the world that the process of forgetting—never a difficult one in that busy quarter—had been very quietly accomplished on either side, and very near male relatives, or friends, Mrs. Applegarde, since her last brother-in-law's death, in the prime of his life, had none.

She had brought up her two young daughters in their cottage home, where they lived like three white doves in a cot, and in the enjoyment of a competence of about twelve hundred a year, which, with their small establishment, and moderate expenditure, might almost have come under the head of wealth.

Although, however, Park Side Cottage was, as I have shown, innocent of any male element whatsoever, in the higher grade of life, that small *ménage* was ruled with a rod of iron, by a domestic tyrant, in the shape of 'the old servant,' the *treasure* of the family, who had lived with

Mr. Applegarde from his boyhood, and who, while he secretly worshipped every member of the family, manifested his inward affection, principally by the undesirable outward sign of general and indiscriminate intimidation.

Mr. Wells, the faithful and time-honoured butler, was, it must be owned, the head of the House of Applegarde. Since Gloriana's spirits and health had failed, indeed, no one had ventured to contradict or to thwart him in any one single particular. She had always been, as he expressed it, the most 'spirity' of the three; and, often and sorely as she had tried his domineering and irritable temperament, he would have given the famous receipt for plate-powder, which had gone down an heirloom from father to son in his family for some generations, to have welcomed once again from her lips the bold defiance or the saucy repartee. It was Wells, indeed, who had first suggested to Mrs. Applegarde, that his young lady's lassitude and general debility was assuming an alarming shape, and that, 'as far as he saw, Mr. Kempe'—the family apothecary, who had attended at Park Side Cottage on all occasions when juvenile epidemics had awoke the anxious fears of the mother for her little girls—' was no better than an old woman, for anything more out of the common than measles or whooping-cough. It's easy to see,' he continued, 'that he doesn't understand the case. It's all very well to say, "I ood, miss," if my young lady wishes to walk on the downs, with an east wind blowing like a razor, because she thinks it bracing; or "I oodn't, miss," if she takes it into her head not to go out in mild weather, because she considers it damp. But, without being able to see into a millstone, it's easy enough to see that he is a better judge of port-wine, than he is of what's ailing Miss Gloriana—and has been for these weeks past.'

But one half or one quarter of this harangue would have been sufficient to raise in Mrs. Applegarde's anxious breast a thousand apprehensions for her daughter's health.

Her husband, and several members of his family, had died of consumption; and the idea that her eldest child might be already drooping from the effects of that insidious and fatal disease, filled her with horror and dread.

The heart of Wells, indeed, bled inwardly as he saw the thin transparent cheek of his beloved mistress grow white under the probe of his awakening words; but he steeled it with the reflection, which greater philosophers than he have made before him, there is *nothing so blind as the blindness of love.* It is one of the most painful things in life to witness that fatal blindness of affection for the danger which threatens its object—to hear a husband, or a parent, or a wife talk calmly of those 'to-morrows,' which, it is an evident fact to the eye of the most indifferent stranger, will never come—to see the eye of the foe in ambush glaring upon the unconscious victim, and know that in a few moments the terrible spring will be made.

Cruel as the words might have appeared at first sight to be, they were dictated by the honest affection of the old servant for his late master's widow and child; and they did good service in the result, which was the well-timed advice of a sagacious doctor, who saw at a glance the best means of arresting the progress of the morbid and melancholy tone of mind, which was laying its withering finger day by day upon the health of the body. Such cases had doubtless come under the doctor's searching eye before; and the same remedy been prescribed perhaps in the same words; for the idea of 'exercise upon four legs being better than exercise upon two' was quite a joke in Sir Erasmus's estimation, and he was fond of a joke, that dapper affable little man, the idol of the fashionable world.

It certainly sounded like a simple remedy enough: but how about the four legs in question? how about the blemishes, the spavins, the splints, the ring-bones, the string halts, the corns, the unsoundnesses, and all the

subtle and incurable evils that those four legs in horse-flesh are heir to? How was it likely that three lovely and innocent women, and one aristocratic butler—to whom the 'noble animal,' as I was taught from my infancy to call the horse, was a quadruped unknown—could procure four sound and intact specimens of the article required, against, as it were, a world in arms? How indeed? The experienced in such matters will scarcely be inclined to agree with Mrs. Applegarde on the subject, who, in the exuberance of her maternal solicitude, declared that the matter 'would be easy enough, if they only set about it the right way.' An easy solution to all the problems which life offers for our consideration, if in that 'right way' itself did not lie the pith and the centre of our bewilderment.

'Don't be volatile, Kate,' she added, addressing her youngest daughter, a mischievous sprite, who was ready enough to make fun of the council of sages assembled, in congress, to discuss the momentous question; 'don't be foolish, my dear, but help us to think what is best to be done under the circumstances. What do you think now of an advertisement, in the *Greyminster Herald?* I can write one out at once:' and taking a sheet of note-paper, and seating herself at the elegantly-appointed writing-table, she began to write with much appearance of determination; quoting herself, as she concluded, the first word of the first sentence, which was the comprehensive word seen in such endless repetition in the columns of the *Times*—the word 'Wanted.'

'There,' she said, with an air of innocent triumph, in her progress so far in the *right* road to achievement—'I have written that; and now, Mr. Wells'—Mrs. Applegarde thus addressed her *butler*, in the dignity of office, although the *man* to her was, for the sake of old associations, sometimes 'Wells,' but oftener than all, simple 'James'—'now we must consider what it is that we *do* want.'

And at this stage of the proceedings, it must be confessed, that the right way became less clear, and that Mrs. Applegarde became painfully conscious of an incapacity, which is common to many, of saying lucidly, or even grammatically, what she did want, when that was to assume the dignity of a 'local habitation and a name' in the advertising sheet of a newspaper. What terrible confusion of the uses of nouns proper and substantive, and what a reckless disregard of the situation of corresponding adjectives, do not such columns daily present, for the mystification of mankind! Why, for instance, should a respectable divine, of average dimensions, and the usual bulk of well-grown humanity, hold out his own diminutive stature as a recommendation to the tenement which he is anxious to let? Why should he take a sort of imbecile and morbid satisfaction in appearing, in the public chronicles of the day, under the depreciating, and, as it appears to us, 'Heep'-ishly 'umble' title of 'a small clergyman'?

Why did Mrs. Applegarde, who was diffident and retiring to a fault, write down three sentences, each calculated to convey—by implication at least—an unseemly exultation in the charms of her eldest daughter to a supercilious and gainsaying world? '*A pretty lady's* horse,—*A quiet lady's* hack,—*A handsome lady's* pony,' she read aloud, with unblushing cheek, and unfaltering voice, quietly appealing to the daughter so described as to 'which she should leave?' 'Or shall I say,' she continued, warming to her work, and getting vaguely glib upon the subject, "Wanted, a horse, for a lady in delicate health, pretty to look at, and not too tall, with a long mane and tail, and must be quiet, and well recommended. Price not such an object as a suitable animal. Apply at Park Side Cottage, Ambledown"?'

'Oh no, mamma, that really won't do at all,' said Gloriana, now thoroughly roused from the languor which

had taken such a hold upon her, and awakened such anxious fears on her account. 'If you send that, we shall have all the screws in the country sent for our inspection. I don't care, either, about having a regular cantering lady's horse; I should like to have one that I could make myself.' Here I must mention that, owing to circumstances (which I do not feel called upon at this stage of the 'Adventures' to explain), Gloriana had heard more about horses than any of the party assembled. That she had read more about them, too, I mentioned before; but the hero horses, the 'Austers,' and the 'Bevises,' and the 'Biavicas' of romance, resembled no more the everyday horses that she was likely to meet in real life, than did their shadowy warrior riders the sporting youths in knickerbockers, with their hands in their pockets, and cigars in their mouths, whom she had met with 'up at the Park.'

Book-knowledge, however, and knowledge confined to mere hearsay, upon any subject, is soon fathomed and exhausted; and in personal experience with regard to them, she was as innocent and as ignorant as the rest of the party. 'We need not mention the height,' she went on to say; 'I have heard people say that a lady always looks better on a horse that is rather high.' The reader will observe that the young lady forbore the word *tall* in describing a horse, which her mother had made use of.

'I would not have a helephant either, miss,' remarked Wells sententiously, who entertained a well-founded horror of anything too much exalted in the shape of a horse, always taking into consideration the probability of a 'fall.'

'The Duke has been thrown, I hear,' remarked one of the field to the huntsman of a celebrated pack, and in reference to an enthusiastic sportsman, who could not ride. 'His grace fell off,' was the short and pointed reply; and it was no doubt with reference to such a contingency, that Mr. Wells delivered his oracular sentence on the

occasion in question. His young mistress had never ridden before. It was more than probable that, in the first days of her initiation, she would meet with the catastrophe which befell the unlucky nobleman, and without any particular coöperation on the part of the horse, find it incumbent on her inexperience to 'fall off.' 'I should say that a good-sized pony would answer all purposes, and be easier to get on and off.'

'So it would, James,' said his mistress, who in this case recognised and approved the feelings of the *man*. 'I should not be so nervous about a pony, when Gloriana takes her first rides.'

'But is Glorry to ride by herself?' observed Kate, suggesting thereby a new difficulty; for it had not entered into the calculations of this family council that somebody would be required to 'ride after' Miss Applegarde, or that that somebody must, of necessity, come under the head of a class held in the utmost abhorrence by Mr. Wells, belonging to the genus groom. A respectable full-blown coachman, who had nothing to do but to handle the reins of his equally fat carriage-horses, was the nearest approach to the region of the stable which that stately official could tolerate between the wind and his nobility.

At Kate's remark, therefore, Mr. Wells experienced that sort of mental revulsion described by the sensation novelist under the type of an earthquake—'if an earthquake had opened under his feet he could not have been more staggered, or his senses been merged into such utter or irremediable confusion,' et cetera, et cetera. The effect of this curious mental phenomenon, in this instance, was that it presented to the imagination of the individual most concerned a series of dissolving views, each one more unwelcome and more clearly defined than the last.

The vision of an intruder at all into the precincts of that refined and aristocratic establishment was cruel enough; but when another rapidly took its place, of a saucy upstart,

looking upon the lovely housemaid, or the good-natured cook, with the aspiring glance of love: of a low wretch, strengthening by open rebellion, or secret strategy, the scarcely stifled faction existing between the kitchen and the housekeeper's room: of an earthworm who, as reigning monarch of the stable, would beard and defy the autocrat of the pantry—the feelings of the victim are more easily imagined than described. The countenance of the great man, generally so immovable, must have betrayed the contending emotions that were at war in his soul; for the contemplation of it provoked Gloriana into remarking, with one of her old smiles, 'You see in what an undertaking we are embarked. "Exercise upon four legs" is an easy thing to talk about; but in our singularly *unhorsey* establishment we are involved in a difficulty every way we turn. Fortunately, there *are* stables; but where shall we find a respectable trustworthy groom?'

'Where indeed?' said Mrs. Applegarde nervously, for she had seen the cloud gathering on the brow of the faithful Wells, as the objectionable word had passed her daughter's lips: 'this is indeed an unforeseen difficulty.'

'And what is he to ride? You must advertise for two horses, whilst you are about it, mother dear,' put in Kate suggestively. 'Sir Erasmus might have made more of his prescription and of his joke, for there must be eight legs in it after all, to say nothing of the additional biped.'

'O Kate! Kate! you are incorrigible. I really do not see though what is to be done, unless you could find some riding companions, my dear.'

'What a pity the young Squire, and Miss Levison, are away from the Park,' remarked Mr. Wells; and at this speech a crimson flush rushed painfully into Gloriana's pale cheek: to divert attention from which circumstance it was, I have no doubt, that she said so hastily: 'Why can't I have a pony, and then surely there could be no harm in my riding about the Park, the commons, and

these quiet lanes by myself? Let me write the advertisement, mamma, please, and we will see first what comes of that;' and taking the pen from her mother's hand, she sat down, and, after a little meditation, wrote as follows:—'Wanted immediately, a good-sized pony, strong, handsome, temperate; warranted sound; that will carry a lady. Apply to Mr. Wells, Park Side Cottage, Ambledown.'

'It is better to imply that there is a man in the case,' the young lady added; 'we are less likely to be done.'

'Certainly, miss,' said the now gratified Wells, with a condescending air of lofty superiority; 'it is by far the better plan.' And smiling the bland smile, which proclaimed that the irascible temperament had accepted and swallowed the sop artfully prepared for its sensitive palate, he condescended himself to be the bearer of the important missive, to the post-office in the village, hard by.

Now there might have been just visible to the naked eye of an ordinary mortal, not bent upon reading aright the riddle of that impassible countenance, the sign of a latent chuckle, hovering round the corners of the mouth, which one of the 'close observers,' so often called to the aid of the story-teller and the novelist, would have traced at once to some mysterious cause, deep hidden in the portly bosom of the man; but as the quiet country village in question afforded neither sage nor philosopher so profound, and recognised Mr. Wells only in his haughty official capacity, the secrets of the human breast were not, in this instance, doomed to be betrayed, and the words which might have revealed their import to the 'earnest inquirer' were muttered to the empty air.

'So the wind lies that way, does it?' he observed twice, when indulging in the habit of absent and preoccupied people, of talking to himself—'so the wind lies that way:' and that he employed a metaphor, while

making this profound statement for his own personal edification, would have been apparent to the aforesaid 'close observer,' or patent-novelist-human-breast penetrator, from the fact that his eyes were bent upon the ground at his feet, and that the gilt weathercock on the church steeple before him was not called upon, in either instance, to warrant or to corroborate the announcement.

The advertisement, the wording of which had been so carefully considered by the inmates of Park Side Cottage, was in time for insertion the same week in the columns of the *Greyminster Herald;* and from that date it must be allowed that the 'parties' in question entered upon a new phase of existence, and became subject to the anomalous infliction of a *daily night*mare, in the shape of horses with three legs to go upon, horses with two, and horses with none; of horses too high, and horses too low; of high-couraged horses, whose grooms could not hold them; and of lean and hungry horses, that might have formed models for Don Quixote's Rosinante; of high-stepping carriage, and even brougham horses; and of low shuffling ponies; of young horses; of old horses; of bay horses; of dun horses; of iron-gray and chestnut horses; of bad horses; of vicious horses; of lame horses; of used-up horses; of horses of every style, stamp, and condition, that would be utterly and entirely useless to a young lady in delicate health, who wished to indulge in a daily canter round the home lanes and commons, in accordance with the advice of her shrewd London physician.

'Let us decide upon buying the next that comes that seems in the least likely to do,' said Gloriana, at last, wearied with the daily and almost hourly arrival of the regiments of screws that offered themselves for the inspection of four pair of eager eyes, all equally ignorant and inexperienced, and all equally determined not on any account to be done. As she spoke the door opened, and the

butler announced the arrival of another man, and another *horse*, 'or cob, as he calls it,' he further condescended to explain; for it must be acknowledged that the temper of Mr. Wells had undergone a severe ordeal, and his dignity been much compromised, by the endurance of unseemly chaff and ridicule, from low-minded individuals belonging to the genus groom.

'Let us have round the horse, or cob, then, or whatever he likes to call it,' said Gloriana languidly. And in compliance with her request, an essentially 'useful animal,' accompanied by a scampish and very horsey-looking attendant, soon made his appearance at the hall-door. 'The cob' was not at all a bad shape, compact, made for strength, and in size something between a horse and a pony, as his name denoted. His hairy legs, however, and coarse head, showed his under-breeding, and detracted much from his merits in the eyes of the ladies.

It was evident that Mr. Wells strongly affected him; and a dose of flattery, not too finely drawn, from the broken-down horsedealer, did more than he would have willingly acknowledged towards securing his good word for the cob.

'I don't like his head,' observed Miss Applegarth objectively; 'it is so large and clumsy-looking.'

'Large, ma'am, do you call it?' said the man, with an air of well-feigned surprise. And then measuring, through a half-closed but infinitely cunning glance, the amount of *flatness* with which he had to deal, he gathered up all the effrontery of his nature, and rode over the last fence between the cob and Mr. Wells's good graces in this remarkable and original sentence: 'Why any one that knows about an oss,'—and here he winked knowingly at the butler, to insinuate that he was included in the respectable category,—'any one that knows about an oss, knows that *his strength lies in his head.* This here cob is the strongest and the 'andsomest in England: and it would be no use



THE COB 'BRUTUS.'

Drawn by Phiz.

of my abusing him to you, sir, because I can see with 'alf an eye that you knows what an oss *is*.'

Now, Mr. Wells, although a man of exalted mind and unimpeachable integrity, was a mortal man after all, and, like other mortals, found it impossible to resist the influence of the flattery that had not a leg to stand upon.

If the horsedealer of broken-down appearance had presumed to remark upon the glitter of the family plate, or to enlarge upon the value of the receipt for plate-powder, which had been handed down as an heirloom from father to son for three generations, the vulnerable point in Mr. Wells's nature would have remained untouched—he would have seen through and despised the attempt upon his understanding at once. But to be told openly, and by implication, that 'he knew what a horse was,' seeing that he knew nothing about horses in general, or any horse in particular, was the little pebble out of the brook against which, properly propelled, his giant strength was as naught.

Flatter a beautiful foolish woman upon her intellect, and a plain clever woman upon her good looks; tell your literary friend, of undeveloped muscularity, that he is first-rate across country, and your sporting friend, who can barely spell, that he would write brilliant articles, and the grossness of the flattery will neither be resented nor perceived, but, on the contrary, it will be imbibed with the greatest relish and gusto.

It is so with frail humanity generally; nor did Mr. Wells in this instance belie his mortal origin. His heart opened towards the man, and towards the strong but ugly brute who was the object of eulogy; and he assumed in their behalf his most pompous and oracular manner as he slowly pronounced the emphatic sentence—

'I think this is decidedly the best animal we have seen, ma'am;' while his eyes wandered with unwonted admira-

tion from the short thick legs to the long carcass and clumsy head of the 'handsomest cob in England.'

The gentle, ladylike, still pretty widow was out upon the lawn, surveying this last specimen of horseflesh which had been presented to her discriminating gaze, through her eyeglass, and she said, when thus appealed to, with the candour that was natural to her—

'I cannot say that I think him pretty; but if he is quiet and gentle, I shall be satisfied, as Miss Applegarde has had no experience in riding as yet; but is ordered to do it for her health,' she added, turning, as she spoke, to address the horsedealer, with that trustful and appealing gaze, which is natural to a fond mother when her child's health and safety are the matters at issue, and which might have possibly touched the 'better nature' of the hardened ruffian in question, for he replied fluently enough—

'It was what I thought, ma'am, when I seed the advertisement; and ses I to myself, Why, there's the brown cob Brutus, as I had off General Hunter, as will carry the lady like a lamb. No wice or nonsense about him; warranted sound, neat as paint, and a bargain at forty guineas, which is his price, and *dirt* cheap too at the money.'

'I should really think he is worth it, mamma,' said Gloriana decisively; 'we have looked at so many, and I don't think we have seen anything more likely to suit us. Suppose that you write a cheque, and let the man leave the horse.'

The moment of decision, however, was always more or less an uneasy one to Mrs. Applegarde; and at such times the feeling of her unprotected state, and of her 'lone and lorn' condition, was wont to intrude upon her with melancholy force.

'If we had only been able to consult some one who really understands about horses,' she began, nervously and unconsciously, but rudely trampling under foot the new-

born vanity in the breast of Mr. Wells: 'it strikes me forcibly that there is a wicked expression about the eye of this horse, and I don't quite like the way in which he moves his ears about when you approach him.'

To this remark the horsedealer vouchsafed no direct reply; but making as though he were about to lead the injured Brutus off at once, he said, addressing himself to the butler, 'If the lady's no buyer, I can't waste my time; the cob's a real good un, and there's twenty after him as it is.'

'*I* don't presume to offer an opinion,' was the majestic reply; and the tone and manner in which it was made awoke Mrs. Applegarde to the conviction, that the feelings of her faithful domestic had been lacerated in some vital part, and that nothing but the most abject humiliation on her side would pour balm into the cruel wound.

Once aware of the fact, she hastened, with her usual kindness, to soothe the feelings that her thoughtless words had ruffled, and to make the *amende honorable* by saying at once, 'It is your opinion that we must act upon; and it is with Mr. Wells that you must deal,' she added, as the horsedealer maintained a somewhat sulky and impertinent demeanour, while awaiting the result of the conference. 'If he approves of the horse I am quite willing to purchase him.'

It is scarcely necessary to add, after this, that the deal was concluded, and that the renowned Brutus was left upon the hands of the ladies of Park Side Cottage, to whom the question thus became a matter of paramount importance, 'What they could make of him?'

Mr. Wells himself exhibited a certain amount of nervous agitation, when the last glimpse of the figure of the horsedealer had told itself off in the direction of the nearest public; but recovering his usual dignity by a strong effort of will, he knowingly avoided the responsibility of handling the cob himself, and assuming a magis-

terial air, commanded the small boy, who did what country people call 'odds and ends' in the house and garden, to lead the horse to the stable, which had been ready prepared for the advent of an animal of some sort or another.

'Your father understands about horses, Bill,' he began, thus paving the way to a negotiation which he had had in his mind since the introduction of the horse subject at Park Side; 'just ask him to step up this evening, and have a glass of ale, will you?'

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE HORSE TURNED OUT WHOSE 'STRENGTH LAY IN HIS HEAD.'

In the course of a day or two everything was prepared for the event of Gloriana's first ride; and Brutus in a bran-new saddle and bridle, and Gloriana in a bran-new habit and hat, formed the nucleus of an admiring crowd of small urchins, who were attracted on the way from school by the novel sight of Miss Applegarde mounted on her new purchase, which seemed likely to afford her some little trouble in the process of 'making' which she had looked forward to with such laudable zeal. Indeed, he appeared, as far as their juvenile faculties were capable of discriminating, to have a very strong will of his own, in furtherance of which he brought his ponderous head to bear, in all its boasted strength, upon the young lady's weak and inexperienced hands.

'I shall be tired to death,' she said to herself when the tussle was at last over, and the cob's head turned, sorely against his will, in the direction of the common, which extended for nearly a mile, and a view of which was commanded from the drawing-room windows of the Cottage.

She was, indeed, almost tired to death as it was, for she was far from strong; but the worst was still to come. She had not hitherto attempted to urge the animal out of a walking pace, and was recruiting her strength for the operation of 'putting him through his paces,' which she hoped to do with immense *éclat* before the admiring eyes of her mother and sister, of Mr. Wells and the boy, and of the boy's father, 'who understood all about horses,' and whose services Mr. Wells had, indeed, finally secured, in order that the cob might do credit to the establishment, and not by his bad condition or slovenly appointments lead to the installation of that hateful functionary, a regular *bonâ-fide* groom.

'You must canter first, you know,' said Gloriana condescendingly, to the brown cob Brutus, who was so devoid of birth and breeding as to reply to this conciliatory address on the part of his mistress, which was accompanied by a corresponding action of hand and foot, by a resolute shake of his uncouth head, and by a decided downward inclination of that appendage in the direction of his fore feet. 'My goodness! I do believe he's going to kick,' said Gloriana; and the observation in this instance was not directed to the horse, but wrung from her in the agony of apprehension which the certain conviction brought to her mind. But Brutus rested satisfied with indulging his playful mood by a caper or two, which, although comparatively innocent in the eyes of lookers-on, shook Gloriana in her saddle to an alarming extent, for the movements of the cob were rough and quick, and there was no manner of spring in the well-developed joints and muscles which had excited such admiration in the breast of Mr. Wells. Once set in motion, Brutus vouchsafed to proceed to the far end of the common in a tolerably steady canter; every now and then, however, breaking into a heavy and dislocating trot, which threw Gloriana's light figure high into the air, and caught it again at the rebound, with a strength and jerkiness

which had an exhausting rather than an exhilarating effect on the nerves and muscles of his rider. Gloriana was not at all devoid of the English quality—pluck; and once embarked in an enterprise, it was not in her nature to give in. 'I have no doubt that it will do me good—in time,' she said spasmodically, between the jerks, when weak physical human nature was pleading rather hard to be let off the severe ordeal of being pounded to death on the back of a regular bone-crusher, and suggesting the abandonment of the whole plan in despair. And it was doing her good, inasmuch as it was employing the faculties both of body and mind—rousing her to exertion, and dispelling the morbid fancies which had been taking such hold of her young imagination. The elephantine gambols of Brutus had accomplished this, if they had done nothing more; but his paces and action had proved so rough and tiring, that as Gloriana dismounted from his back by means of a chair, which the ever-watchful Wells had brought for her accommodation, she turned suddenly pale, and then reeled and fell from the chair into his arms in a dead heavy swoon.

'Take the brute away, can't you?' the butler said, with much irritation, to the man of understanding with regard to the noble animal; 'take him away to the stable. If this is to be the consequence of exercise on four legs, I think two's a better number; and I don't put so much faith in Sir Erasmus as I did. Don't be alarmed, ma'am,' he continued, as he bore his insensible burden into the drawing-room, and deposited it upon a sofa; 'it's only the haction of that 'ere Brutus that has been too much for Miss Gloriana; and she so weak, poor thing! I doubt whether she'll be able to stand it now.'

Poor Mrs. Applegarde looked as pale as Gloriana, but Kate, whose presence of mind never forsook her, began immediately to busy herself about the prostrate form of her sister—chafing her hands and feet, bathing her white

face and brows with eau de Cologne, and applying smelling-salts to her nostrils.

'She's a-coming to now,' said Wells, as the first tender flush of colour in her cheeks bespoke the return of suspended animation; and the poor mother, who was trembling in her helpless anxiety, stooped to kiss her forehead, saying, in a flutter of lachrymose agitation—

'It's all that nasty horse, I know. Sir Erasmus made a great mistake, and forgot how weak the poor child was. But never mind, my dear, you shall not attempt to ride again; and it will, indeed, be quite a relief to my mind. I said all along there was something wicked about its eyes and the way in which it put its ears back when you approached it; and after it jumped about with you in that dreadful way on the common, I could not bear to look out again. Kate told me that you had come through the front gate all right, and the next thing I beheld was Wells carrying you in in a fainting state. But never mind, my dear, you shall not ride again; and we'll get rid of that dreadful horse as soon as possible.'

'Indeed, mamma,' said Gloriana, raising herself on her elbow on the sofa cushion, 'it is not at all a dreadful horse, and I enjoyed my ride immensely; I hope to ride again to-morrow and every day; and I do not intend to disgrace myself in this way again. After all, there was nothing wonderful in my fainting, for I have heard *men* say'—and here she blushed slightly, for the sayings and doings of men had been hitherto little canvassed amongst the gentle tenants of Park Side Cottage—'I have heard men say that they are often regularly knocked up with the first day's hunting; and of course a first ride is the same thing to me. I am all right now,' she added; but it must be confessed that her looks did not quite bear out the assertion; and she was obliged before very long to own to a more than usual feeling of fatigue and exhaustion, and to retire unwillingly to bed. But the spell, it would appear, was already work-

ing, for she did all she could to arouse herself, and fought against the languor which before this memorable ride she had perhaps in some measure fostered and encouraged.

In the course of the evening Mr. Wells was summoned to an interview with the man of understanding with regard to the stable economy of the brown cob Brutus, which ended, I am sorry to say, in his becoming a second time a dupe, through the medium of the unerring shaft of flattery, directed with faultless aim to the vulnerable point in his manly breast. That the quadruped in question was likely to consume a certain amount of hay and corn, and that he 'lay upon straw,' was the extent of his information upon the subject under discussion, and he was, therefore, as might be supposed, helpless as a child in the hands of a man who possessed a large share of the quality of '*cuteness*, generally supposed to appertain to intellects sharpened on the grindstone of a knowledge of horseflesh. The spoils of the unconscious cob had, indeed, formed the corner-stone of a very pretty castle in the air, which had been run up, regardless of expense, in the fertile brain of the worthy known to the village by the suggestive cognomen of 'Knowing Ned;' and he blessed the happy fate that had cast into his net such an unmitigated 'flat' as the worthy butler, who became in his hands an easy, although unconscious tool.

'I'll do justice to that oss, Mr. Wells,' he began, 'purvided you see me through it in the matter of wages. I understands all about osses, and did from a boy; but if I undertakes groom's work, I must have groom's pay—barring the livery, which I don't ask for, seeing I can't ride since I threw out a splint in my near leg, which you knows, Mr. Wells, as well as I can tell you, and that I speak the truth. There's my old 'ooman, as attends church reg'lar, and always did from a child, would tell you the same any day on her Bible oath.'

'We don't want no grooms in livery here,' replied the

butler, with so much eagerness that, by an over-liberality in the matter of negatives, he destroyed the force of his own remark. 'But the horse must be attended to; and I'll speak to my mistress on the subject. Have a glass of ale, my good man, and look to the cob till further orders, will you?'

And it was in this manner that the man of understanding with regard to horses, the father of the boy who did the odds and ends of work at Park Side Cottage, who went by the name of 'Knowing Ned' in the village, inserted the thin end of the wedge of his own fortunes into the tempting aperture which the false diplomacy of Mr. Wells with regard to an *irregular* groom offered to his acute perceptions.

'I sees my way to fifty pounds, if I sees it to a shillin',' he said to himself, as he swallowed a refreshing draught of his patron's home-brewed ale. 'The first thing I'll do will be to swop the brown cob for the old mare Blind Bess. If Miss Applegarde rides him to-morrow she won't the day after—unless I am *very* much mistaken, leastways.'

What diabolical plot was hatching under the skull of knavish contour appertaining to 'Knowing Ned,' to perpetrate on the morrow with regard to his young mistress and the brown cob Brutus, I will leave the next chapter of these 'Adventures' to reveal, only hinting that it was one which appeared to afford him unwonted satisfaction, for he chuckled to himself a low cunning chuckle as he littered down Brutus for the night, observing to that stolid quadruped during the operation, 'You are a nice oss, *you* are; but you ain't fit for a lady noways.'

CHAPTER III.

STABLE SECRETS—SHOWING HOW THE BROWN COB BRUTUS BECAME THE PROPERTY OF 'KNOWING NED,' AND THE BLIND MARE THE PROPERTY OF MISS APPLEGARDE.

GLORIANA escaped the designs of that villanous individual 'Knowing Ned,' whatever they might have been, for a whole week. She was, indeed, regularly knocked up; and, notwithstanding her courage and determination, she was unable to conceal the fact from the watchful eyes of her mother and sister, and was, consequently, absolutely forbidden to ride again until she had recovered her usual amount of strength, or rather the same amount of it that she possessed when she had consulted the London doctor. On the eighth day from the date of her first ride, Knowing Ned becoming anxious, like all plotters, to put his design into execution, made a point of meeting Mr. Wells as he took his short daily walk to the village post-office; and pulling his forelock with the same amount of respect he would have shown to a master had he possessed one, he thus addressed him:

'The cob's wery fresh, Mr. Wells; he'll be too much for the young lady if she don't keep him in exercise; he's got a temper, too, of his own; and them low-bred uns is apt to get tricky.'

'Good gracious! what is to be done, then?' was the butler's reply. 'It's a take in, if the cob ain't quiet; because we advertised for a quiet one, "to carry a lady."'

'He ain't quiet now—leastways he's very free with his heels in the stable; and I don't see no chance of his getting quiet standing eating his head off in the stable, and nothing taken out of him noways.'

With these ominous words, which filled his hearer with apprehension, and causing him to give utterance to those

peculiar signs of lamentation made with the tongue and palate of the mouth, Knowing Ned turned away, and hobbled slowly in the direction of the stable. A few minutes afterwards he was followed, as he had foreseen, by Mr. Wells, who was anxious to ascertain the state of the brown cob's temper with his own eyes, and who, before he got to the door, became aware, through the medium of another organ, that an active encounter or trial of strength was going on between him and his personal attendant, while in tones of remonstrance the latter addressed his charge: 'You would, would you!—Quiet, you varmint, will you!—Come up!—Stand still!—Go over!' while, as Mr. Wells cautiously peered round the stable-door, two iron-shod heels flashed within a yard of his face, causing him to retire with precipitation, heedless of the invitation addressed to him by Ned to come in and see what a 'wicious brute' he had to deal with; or to lay his hand upon his quarters, and just see 'if he didn't let out.' Unwilling to put the irascible temperament of the cob to any personal test, he heartily concurred with the remark that 'he was not fit for a lady noways;' and as he hastened the preparations for tea, which, in an establishment so entirely feminine, was, as I need scarcely observe, *the* meal of the day, he resolved upon disburdening his mind on the subject of the brown cob's disqualifications during the progress of that social repast.

Gloriana herself paved the way for the observations he intended to make by saying, 'I shall be able to ride again to-morrow: the stiffness is quite gone off; and Brutus will be getting too much for me if he has neither exercise nor work.'

'I am very much afraid that he won't suit, after all, Miss Gloriana,' said Wells pompously. 'I am afraid he is full of vice: he nearly killed Ned and me in the stable to-day.'

'Oh, horses are often very vicious in the stable that are very quiet out!' was the reply. 'There is War Eagle

up at the Park, who is as quiet as a lamb when he's mounted. And there's only one of the helpers that he will let dress him over; and he nearly killed him once.'

'Dear me!' said Mrs. Applegarde; 'how dreadful! And how did you hear that, my dear?' she added, while, luckily for Gloriana's sake, whose colour, ever rosy, had become deep crimson at the question, she wandered on in a way that was habitual with her. 'But it really is such an undertaking having anything to do with horses with no gentleman to consult, and so much roguery and deception going on. I do so much regret that your poor dear uncle, who always had such fine horses, and so beautifully kept, should have died just when he did—not, of course, on that account only, but such a loss as he was to his family. Like your poor dear papa, my dears, excepting that he was never such a domestic man, and not so tall or good-looking, either—not such an *Applegarde*, in fact,' said the widow, drawing herself up, and glorying in the name of the husband whom she had idolised, and to whom, in the freshness of her remarkable beauty, she had also been all in all. Perhaps, had he lived, the great simplicity of her character, which was an additional charm in early youth— But why should I suggest any doubt as to his constancy under a contingency not fated to occur? Why should we despise simplicity even in mature age, when it is the sign of the innocence of a nature that contact with the world can neither sully nor efface? Let simplicity grow old if it can. If it sometimes weary us, it must command, nevertheless, our love and our respect. There are depths and heights both of evil and of good which must be hid from such natures evermore. But while the strong currents wrestle in the deeps, and the storm-clouds gather on the mountain-tops, let the sunbeams play gently on the shallows of life: all are beautiful: it is we who are blind in only allowing beauty in what we can appreciate and understand. Mrs. Applegarde's nature was a very simple but a very lovable

one; and I was wrong in hinting that had her husband lived he would have found it less attractive than in the fresh spring-time of early youth. I am sure, upon reflection, that I was quite wrong.

'I shall try Brutus again to-morrow, at all events,' said Gloriana, taking up the thread of the subject which she and Mr. Wells had had under discussion when her mother had rambled off on her favourite palfrey of somewhat disconnected reminiscences; 'it will not be easy to get rid of him if he does not suit.'

'I am afraid not, miss,' was the reply; 'but there's no knowing; and things do turn up sometimes unawares'—a maxim in the philosophy of human affairs, which none of Mr. Wells's audience felt inclined either to gainsay or refute; indeed, as he disappeared with short quick steps under the weight of the tea-urn and his own increasing flesh, Mrs. Applegarde remarked enthusiastically, 'I really don't know what would become of us without James,' so entirely had he impressed his mistress with the idea that he was a necessary unit in the scheme of her existence—*the* unit, in fact, which gave importance and meaning to the three ciphers which, in all matters of business (or horseflesh), she considered herself and her daughters to be.

As Knowing Ned the next day saddled Brutus for Miss Applegarde to ride, there was a latent sparkle of triumph to be observed in the corner of his *most* knowing eye, which did not diminish as the cob made his exit from the stable with a playful flourish of his heels, and with a snort which betrayed to the experienced in such things, that he was 'full of fettle and play.'

''Ware heels!' cried Ned, in tones of caution to Mr. Wells, who was ambling slowly and cautiously round the palfrey, with a view of ascertaining that he was 'all right' before his young mistress mounted; and before the words were well out of his mouth, Brutus indulged in a kick

which had for its object the person of the valued domestic, to whom he appeared, indeed, to have conceived a great personal aversion.

'"Ow on earth is Miss Gloriana to get up, I should like to know, with the brute lashing out in that way?' said the butler, with great asperity, and surveying the clumsy form of the 'andsomest cob in England' with but little trace of his former admiration and approval.

'*She* ain't afraid, I knows,' was the answer intended for Gloriana's ears, who appeared at that moment ready equipped, and followed by Mrs. Applegarde and Kate, who shared the fears of Mr. Wells with regard to the cob, and who were both nervously anxious as to the result of the ride.

'I must have a chair, I believe,' said Gloriana, who blushed a little at the idea of the implied inexpertness both of the mounter and the mountee; but the chair having been placed, after some little display of resistance on his part, by the side of the horse, she displayed great quickness and nimbleness in mounting thence to his broad back.

No sooner was she in the saddle, and the reins gathered 'nohow,' as Ned afterwards observed, in her hand, than Brutus, left to his own devices, kicked over the chair which had been a source of annoyance to him; and finding that in so doing he had hurt his own heels, he kicked again spitefully more than once, so that Gloriana with difficulty kept her seat, and was fain to cling for life or death to the pommel of her saddle, which, being an old-fashioned one supplied from the stock of the village sadler, possessed that appendage in a more developed state than is necessary now in the improved state of things with regard to modern side-saddles, the tall awkward crutch on the off side being now entirely done away with, and the balance preserved by what is, in fact, only a second pommel placed in a different position.

'He'll be all right presently, miss,' said Knowing Ned,

who in his own mind had planned that Gloriana should have enough of the cob's antics that day to sicken her of him at once and for ever. 'Just give him his head, and take it out of him a bit, right down the common. He'll be quiet enough after a bit.'

Fallacious hope! No sooner did Brutus find under his hoofs the short elastic turf of Ambledown Common, than, mad from the effects of his long holiday and four feeds of corn daily (with which Ned had supplied him, for purposes best known to himself), he commenced a series of plunges and jumps which were terrible to look at, and still worse to experience.

'What a beast you are!' said poor Gloriana, shaken to death, and really hurt with the violence of the cob's movements. 'I can never do anything with you, I am quite sure, so it's no use attempting it:' and turning his head towards home, she intended to take him back, and give up all attempts to ride him for the future. But, alas! even that little space she was not destined to traverse in safety, for the overfed and underbred cob finding his head turned towards the stable which had proved such a Paradise to his sensual nature, gave a final bound and twist, which succeeded in dislodging Gloriana from the saddle; and as she lay prostrate on the turf, which was luckily soft with recent rain, he galloped home, snorting and riderless, to frighten the inmates of the Cottage almost to death on the spot. Gloriana herself was the least frightened of all, excepting, perhaps, the wicked author of the mischief, Knowing Ned, who had fed up Brutus in the hope of the present result, and who, having his wits more about him than any of the rest of the party, and notwithstanding the splint in his off leg, ran down the coach-road and out upon the common with the speed of an agile demon to offer his hypocritical condolences to the victim of his own craftiness.

'You ain't hurt, miss, I 'ope,' he said, as Gloriana picked herself up, and proceeded to walk with rather unsteady

trembling steps towards home. 'I told Mr. Wells what a wicious varmint he was afore ever you got on his back.'

'No, I am not hurt in the least,' was the reply; 'but I can see that the cob will never do for me. I am tired to death before I have been on his back five minutes.'

'In course you be, miss. He ain't got no spring about him, he ain't; and he's a reg'lar low-bred un into the bargain. There's nothing like blood for a lady. I wos a-thinking this morning, miss, afore you went out, of a black mare that would suit you to a T.'

'We have got to get rid of the cob before we think of getting another,' said Gloriana, rather shortly, for she felt that the horsey man was too loquacious to be altogether agreeable; and she hastened on to assure her anxious mother that there were no bones broken, and that she was none the worse for the fall, with the exception of the shake. 'But one thing I am certain of, mamma,' she added, with a sigh, 'and that is, that *Brutus will never do!* he is too rough and too full of tricks. And I am only very sorry that I persuaded you to buy him.'

'Don't think about money, my child, where your precious health is concerned: there must be suitable horses to be had for money; and if your poor dear uncle had only lived, he would have given us the best advice of any one that I ever knew. We must get rid of this one, there is no doubt—nasty thing!—if we only get ten pounds for him.'

The plot which Knowing Ned had hatched in his artful brain would, he foresaw, through the innocence of his victims be very easily carried into execution. His brother, a vagabond horse-coper, who wandered about the country from one fair to another, had upon his hands at that moment a black thorough-bred mare—aged, blind of one eye, and, as Ned himself would have described it, 'screwed all over,' which he had purchased at the high figure of three pound ten, in the hope that he might be lucky enough to find some one willing to buy her for five.

That very afternoon a despatch was forwarded by a sure hand from the stable-room at Park Side, which, for brevity of expression and condensation of matter, might have formed a model to be studied with advantage by members of circumlocution offices, who manage to cover



'BRUTUS WILL NEVER DO!'

reams of paper without conveying a quarter of the meaning contained in the terribly dirty document, which ran as follows:

'Send the black mare bak by barer—I've got some flat uns.—From bruther Ned.'

It is scarcely necessary to add, after this, that the black

mare duly arrived, or that she proved a good card in the hands of the vagabond horse-coper and his knowing brother. She was a sweet-tempered, gentle beast, showing a great deal of blood: she had, indeed, in her palmy days, been a promising racing mare, but had broken down suddenly and irrevocably in the zenith of her fame, and had since been knocked about the world, being preserved only from utter ruin by various good qualities, which made her a pleasant hack. All her remaining advantages were now, however, sadly upon the wane. Her regular up and down lady's canter was becoming daily more wooden and unsafe. Her eyes were going: one, indeed, was quite gone; and she was, in fact, a mere wreck, hardly worth the three pound ten that had been given for her on speculation by her latest purchaser. She was in very fair condition, never having had the misfortune to fall into bad hands, in the merciless sense of the words; and as she was led round and round the carriage ring, for the inspection and approval of the ladies, they all exclaimed simultaneously, 'What a pretty creature!' while the romance attending the name of 'Black Bess,' her high-bred and gentle manners, and the way she had of insinuating her velvet muzzle into their caressing hands, decided the feminine council at once upon the expediency of the *swop*, which Knowing Ned had so artfully proposed. He was not likely to lose much by the transaction, for Brutus, the cob, was a valuable animal in his own line. Six years old, sound, strong as a camel, and with a camel's powers of endurance, he was quite worth the forty guineas which Mrs. Applegarde had paid for him, although not worth forty shillings to her; for had he been ever so quiet, his action in itself would have prevented any one so delicate in health as her daughter then was, from enjoying the exercise of riding him; and tricky and restive into the bargain, it was quite out of the question that she would be able to profit by his services. Notwithstanding the fall, however, and notwithstanding the shake,

wonderful to relate, she was decidedly better. She had roused herself from the lethargy and languor into which she had been fast sinking, and the difficulties attending the attainment of the prescribed exercise excited, amused, and interested her. Truly Sir Erasmus Globule deserved credit for the discernment which had foreseen such happy results.

Perceiving that his design was succeeding, even beyond his expectations, Knowing Ned was seized with a brilliant idea, and on the spur of the moment, and with unblushing effrontery, he said, 'For twenty guineas and the brown cob, my brother would part with the mare; there's not a sweeter 'ack in all the country than she is on road or turf.'

'What do you think, Wells?' said Mrs. Applegarde, appealing to the family oracle, who, since his signal failure with regard to the cob, had been rather silent when the subject of a fresh purchase had come under discussion.

'I think Miss Gloriana had better try this one, in the first instance,' he said deliberately: 'one can't always judge of a horse by the outside.'

'I'll put the saddle on her at once, miss,' said Ned suggestively; 'she'll carry you like a lamb, and you'll see that there's no deception about her. She's no bone-crusher, she ain't.'

So Gloriana, being easy of persuasion with regard to adventure, determined upon trying Black Bess at once; and having mounted by means of the chair, the mare cantered away with her quietly down the coach-road, and then quietly on to the smooth turf, with easy action, up and down like a rocking-horse, and holding her light head in a graceful arch from her neck, a very different thing from the heavy pull which the cob had maintained upon the weak hands of his rider.

'Oh, this is delightful! and you are a dear creature,' was Gloriana's exclamation, as she rode up to the door, neither shaken nor exhausted, but with a healthy glow in

her transparent cheek. 'I feel, mamma, that this sort of riding *will* do me good.'

'I wish I had said forty and the cob,' said Ned to himself, as he saw the gratified looks of the whole party, and witnessed the caresses lavished on Black Bess, while Wells himself was not afraid to approach within three arms' length of the gentle animal. The bargain was concluded there and then, according to the first proposal, and the valuable mare was installed in the vacant place of Brutus, who, as he took his departure, was little regretted by any of the party, least of all by his particular patron, Mr. Wells, who had so strongly affected him in the first instance. Black Bess, on the contrary, became quite a pet with the whole establishment, and some weeks had elapsed before anything occurred to throw a light upon the real value of the animal, for whom four times her value in money had been given, and the cob actually given away.

As far, indeed, as Gloriana's health was concerned, she had proved a good investment. The gentle exercise, without fatigue, which her easy action and light mouth afforded, did such wonders, that in three weeks the country doctor pronounced that Miss Applegarde was in a fair way to the recovery both of her health and spirits. 'But,' he added, in a voice of warning, 'you must be very careful how you ride, for that mare is far from safe, and the common ground is very rough and uneven in some places: if she were to come down there, she would give you a bad fall.'

'Black Bess is as quiet as a lamb, doctor, I assure you,' put in Mrs. Applegarde. 'Gloriana tells me that it requires no exertion to manage her, and that is the great thing, after all, in her delicate state of health.'

'Quiet she is, ma'am, I grant you, but not safe, nevertheless; and a blind horse, with shaky fore legs, is scarcely a desirable mount for a young lady, who, with all the courage, has scarcely at present the best hand in the

world,' remarked the blunt doctor; while Gloriana blushed crimson with indignation at the slur thus cast upon her riding, and exclaimed, simultaneously with her mother and sister:



'BLACK BESS.'

'A blind horse! You do not mean to say that Black Bess is blind, doctor?'

'One eye is going, and the other is already gone; and

I believe,' he added, 'that the name of the animal has undergone a slight alteration lately, and that by changing three letters *blind* has become *black*, for your especial accommodation. I heard all about *Blind* Bess at Hill Top Farm, where she is as well known as the postman, who has ridden her backwards and forwards on the turnpike road to Fairyard every day for the last three years. She fell down with him so often, that he sent her to the fair, where she was sold for three pound ten. I won't say who to, for fear of making mischief, but I could not hear all this without giving you warning, and putting you more on your guard.'

'It must be really dangerous, my dear,' said Mrs. Applegarde, addressing her daughter; 'you know you have told me about her stumbling so much lately, and Ned put it down to her having been newly shod: but I do not like this account at all, and only trust that he knew nothing of the creature's antecedents when he brought her here.'

'I know nothing about that,' said the cautious doctor; 'but I hope and trust that Miss Applegarde will ride her carefully, if she continues to ride her at all.'

'I always do that,' she replied; 'and, indeed, you must not think of recommending me to give up riding, now that I am so fond of it, for if I do I shall certainly be ill again.'

'Give up riding on no account, but ride with as much regard for your neck as you can; and do not, above all things, trust to the perception of a blind mare when you gallop over rabbit commons with a loose rein.'

'What stuff he talks,' said Gloriana peevishly, as he left the room; 'he goes gossiping about at farmhouses, and believes all the nonsense that they tell him. I am sure that Black Bess is perfectly safe myself.'

Now that her eyes had been opened, however, to the unwelcome fact, she could not help recalling to mind that

the mare did very often stumble, especially on rough or uneven ground, and that she relied entirely on the hand which guided her, which being an inexperienced, and on that account an undecided one, often courted the danger which it wished to avoid. It was but a week after the doctor's warning that she fell as she was galloping, propelling her rider over her head with some force to the ground, and cutting her own knees cruelly on the mound of gravel which had caused the accident. Poor Gloriana returned home somewhat crestfallen, but fortunately not much hurt. A family council was held the next day, in which it was decided the poor broken-knee'd Bess should be turned out in the meadow belonging to the cottage, and kept merely as a pet; for her sweet temper and affectionate disposition had won for her the regard of all the inmates of Park Side Cottage, and they agreed that for the services she had rendered she was entitled to a pension, or turn out in clover, for the remainder of her natural life.

'She has done her part in bringing back your roses, my dear,' said Mrs. Applegarde; 'and she deserves my everlasting gratitude for that. And now there is a more difficult question to decide, and that is, What is to be done about getting another? And whom,' added the widow despairingly, 'whom *are we* to trust?'

'I have been thinking it over,' replied Gloriana musingly. 'I heard from Miss Levison the other day, and she wishes me to have the Welsh pony, "Taffy," until they return from abroad. Perhaps it will be the best plan after all; and, as I ride alone, it will be easier to get on and off, and to open and shut gates: don't you think so, Kate?'

'Would they not allow us to buy the pony?' suggested Mrs. Applegarde. 'I do not much like being under an obligation, even to the Levisons.'

'Perhaps they think the obligation would be the other way,' said Gloriana proudly: 'they asked me, as a favour,

to use the pony, and I have reason to know that they mean what they say.'

As Gloriana had mentioned only Miss Levison's name in the first instance, the substitution of the third person plural for that of the third person singular would have struck the ear of most mothers at once, for in that plural was included their very good-looking, manly, and agreeable young Squire and landlord, Ralph Levison, who had taken it into his head suddenly to go abroad for six months, no one knew why or wherefore, just before Gloriana's illness had alarmed her friends. But Mrs. Applegarde had not that instinctive penetrative faculty which makes a secret an impossible thing to a mother's eye. She did not know, and she could not see, that the motive which induced Gloriana to accept the offer of the Welsh pony, made to her by Mr. Levison through his sister, had something more in it than appeared on the surface: and when her daughter did all that she could do under the circumstances, viz. hint it to her, she did not take the hint.

The reader must exercise his own discernment upon this matter. It is not likely that he should be more discriminating than a mother; nor am I bound to reveal any secrets, or make any hints, before the appointed time. All that it is necessary to say here is, that Taffy was located in the empty stall, and he became first favourite with Gloriana, who enjoyed upon his back what she began to call real rides. He was a handsome, strongly-built, spirited pony, full of courage, and entirely free from vice. Over the wild breezy commons, in the rough and stony lanes, he was equally clever and safe as a hack, and Gloriana, although self-taught, was learning, by daily experience, to ride well. The only thing remarkable about this pony was his extraordinary appetite. The stable-bills which Mrs. Applegarde settled every quarter mounted up to fabulous sums; and when she remonstrated with Ned on

the subject, the only remark that he vouchsafed in reply was:

'Them Welsh ponies is hawful ones to feed; and Miss Applegarde won't have him stinted, anyhow.'

'Of course; no one wishes him to be stinted,' replied his easy mistress; 'and if he wants it, he must have it; but it seems to me quite extraordinary that a mere pony should eat so much.'

'It's no objick to me,' said Knowing Ned doggedly: 'we'll make him do upon less; but if he looks poor, I know who'll get the credit of it when the young squire comes home.'

And acting upon the dark threat which he had held out, he supplied poor Taffy with about half a feed of corn a day, out of a supply sufficient to keep two hunters in high condition for the ensuing quarter; so that the pony's ribs began to show, even through the heavy coat with which nature had provided him.

'He looks worse and worse,' said Gloriana, as she brought him in early one day, grieved to the heart to see him falling off so when she wished him to be looking his best. 'Do you think that you give him corn enough?' she added, looking hard at Ned, who had not, it must be owned, enjoyed her perfect confidence since the suspicious affair of Black Bess.

'I gives him what the missus allows,' he replied, saucily enough: 'I can't do more by him nor that.'

Gloriana flew to her mother to inquire into the meaning of this mysterious imputation, and extracted from her that she had certainly recommended retrenchment in the matter of the stable economy, but that she had expressly stipulated that the pony should have enough.

'He *must* have enough, if I pay for it out of my own pocket,' was the hasty reply. 'I can never send him back to the Park with his bones staring out of his skin, in the way they are doing now.'

And the next day she did in fact order two bags of corn from a friendly farmer, which she kept under lock and key, and from which, notwithstanding the black looks of the irregular groom, she administered three feeds daily to Taffy with her own fair hands.

'There will be no corn-bill for mamma this quarter,' she said severely to that worthy, who looked terribly sulky at being outwitted in the tactics which the easy credulity of his mistress had suggested to his fertile mind. He had his revenge, however, and the pony was the sufferer after all.

'He'll put on no flesh till he's clipped, miss,' he remarked to his young mistress, who was lamenting over Taffy's shaggy appearance; 'he was always clipped up at the Park long afore this.'

'Was he?' Gloriana eagerly remarked. 'We must get him done at once, then. I do not want them to see any difference in him when he goes back.'

Taffy was clipped and singed accordingly; and with the additional supply of corn, and the superabundant flow of spirits induced by the loss of his thick greatcoat, he became almost too much for Gloriana, and as frisky without any vice as a pony could well be. The nights were frosty and cold, and Taffy's coat was very short; so that a window left open—by accident, of course—one bitter night, did the work that was to prove Knowing Ned's revenge for the interference of Gloriana in the matter of stable economy. Taffy coughed twice the following morning; and the next day he coughed continuously; and the day after that Miss Applegarde heard the unwelcome news that the pony had inflammation in him, and that it was a chance if his life could be saved. A messenger was sent at once into Greyminster, on the blind mare, to summon the veterinary surgeon that the town afforded. He came with all speed, but only in time to find that the pony was beyond his aid: the sudden change from starvation to good feeding, and

the exposure to the chilling night air in his newly-clipped state, had done its work. Taffy was indeed dying; and if the poor pony had been a Christian, as the saying is, the announcement could hardly have been attended with more genuine sorrow in the hearts of all concerned; while Gloriana herself was the victim of the most agonising pangs of remorse. Knowing Ned, who had not intended or foreseen the fatal result of his work, lost no opportunity of impressing upon her mind that it was all her doing, and that the pony had been overfed; in which opinion he was confirmed by the doctor, who observed that there was more harm done by overfeeding among ladies' pets, whether ponies or lap-dogs, than by the more healthy abstemiousness of less-favoured animals. This was the last straw on the camel's back, which proved too much for Gloriana to bear. To be accused of being instrumental in the death of the poor pony, who had been her one thought and care since she had undertaken the charge of him—whom she had fed and caressed daily with her own hands, and ridden with as much care as though in his sturdy frame had been concentrated the glory and the value of all the horses in Christendom—oh, it was too much! and the burst of grief which followed the announcement must have touched even the heart of the author of the evil, if anything so human throbbed in his villanous breast. There was a Nemesis for him in poor Taffy's death, and this last stroke of diplomacy was fatal to his own cause. Gloriana absolutely refused to make any further efforts to procure either horse or pony to supply the lost favourite's place.

'It is absurd, in an establishment consisting entirely of women, attempting to have anything to do with horses,' she said. 'It's bad enough to have to tell the Levisons that Taffy is dead, without letting them think that I have thought so little of it as to set up another already in his place.' The Levisons were, indeed, at that moment on

their road home, so she knew not where to write to them to break the sad news of the pony's death.

'I do believe, Glorry, that you had rather it had been me,' said Katie rallyingly, as with a pale and harassed face her sister prepared for her walk to the Park the day after the return of its inmates, to convey the first news of the misfortune herself.

'Do not laugh at me, Katie,' was the reply; 'but tell me what I shall say to Mr. Levison. I shall be quite ill with worry and anxiety before it is over.'

'I thought Taffy belonged to *Miss Levison*,' said Kate archly. 'You always talked as if Harriet had lent him to you.'

'She made me the offer, of course,' answered her sister, whose neck and temples were crimson as she spoke; 'but the pony did not belong to her.'

'Then, indeed, I do not think that you have much to be afraid of,' Kate remarked, with a glowing smile. 'O Glorry, what a fool you must think me if you don't know that *I* know all about it!'

'Hush! hush!' said Gloriana, putting her hand over her sister's mouth; 'there is nothing to know. And don't tease me, Katie dear, for I am so *very* unhappy. Come to the Park with me,' she added beseechingly; and the loving little sister, who saw that she really wished it, and who was full of genuine feeling under her fun, lost no time in putting on her hat and shawl, and was ready and waiting before Gloriana, who was still lingering, had slowly descended into the hall.

CHAPTER IV.

'Shy she was, and I thought her cold,
Proud, and I fled o'er the sea;
Filled I was with folly and spite,
While Ellen Adair was dying for me.'



In treating of Gloriana and her 'Adventures,' I must plead guilty to having hitherto bestowed more attention on

the *horses* with which she was from time to time so artfully *saddled*, than on the young lady herself. And to repair so serious an error, I will proceed to give a description of my heroine, now (through the agency of Sir Erasmus, and those various steeds, good, bad, and indifferent) in the possession of glowing health, and of all the charms with which Nature had in her case been unusually lavish. She was, indeed, a beautiful girl; and she had also the great, and not very common, advantage of being very diffident and modest on the score of her own attractions. She had lived so secluded a life, with little or no society but that of her mother and sister, that she had not found the opportunity, generally afforded to a girl of her age, of testing the value of her own beauty by the judgment of the world of men. And yet hers was a face that no one could pass, without longing to gaze again and again upon its rare and perfect loveliness. It had the charm and fascination, which an ever-varying expression alone can give. Animated or shy, merry or thoughtful, the countenance was in every changing mood the reflex and image of the pure and ingenuous mind. Her eyes, of a deep violet, shaded by their dark lashes, were

'Now brightly bold, now beautifully shy,'

and as eyes should be, they were the most attractive feature of her face. Her hair was luxuriant in quantity and rich in colour; her figure lithe and slender, and, now that she had recovered her health, upright as a dart, and indicative of the strength combined with slightness, which can alone be productive of genuine grace. 'She does look well on horseback,' had been the remark of all who had seen her, even on the sorry mounts—with the exception of poor Taffy—with which she had hitherto been accommodated.

I observed above that Gloriana had had as yet no opportunity of testing the power of her own attractions over the hearts of the other sex; one, however, there had

been who would have proved neither indifferent nor disloyal to them, had he received but the slightest encouragement from the lips of his youthful enslaver. The young Squire, Ralph Levison—who had become master of the Park since the death of a distant relative, and who resided there with his sister, Miss Levison, a good-natured but weak single woman of a certain age—no sooner saw Gloriana, in her white dress and garden hat, pruning her roses at the 'Cottage,' which was situated within the boundaries of his own Park, than he fell desperately in love with the fair vision, and, acting upon the spur of an ingenuous nature, he lost little time in making his devotion apparent. At this stage of the proceedings, however, his ardour had received a check; Gloriana was very shy, and she also possessed a great deal of that comparatively rare quality, maidenly dignity; and being conscious in her own heart of a dawning partiality for their handsome neighbour and landlord, she thought it incumbent upon her to be less cordial and genial with him, than she would have been to a more commonplace and indifferent acquaintance. This line of conduct became more marked, in consequence of the garrulous twaddle of Miss Levison, the maiden sister, who was continually impressing on the minds of 'the girls at the Cottage,' that 'her brother was looked upon as the catch of the county;' and that the advances which were made to him by mothers on the part of their daughters, and even by the daughters themselves, were absolutely '*shocking*.' 'Shocking,' indeed, was Miss Levison's favourite condemnatory interjection; and according to her own account the revulsions to which her delicate organisation was subjected, in the course of one day, must have been serious and overwhelming. She was very fond of talking of her brother, and, indeed, the whole affection of which she was capable was concentrated in him; but owing to the natural love of deception and misrepresentation, to which all women who gossip are more or less subject, she

managed to do him more mischief, in a matter which affected his happiness, than she was at all aware of. He was young, ardent, and impulsive, and stung by the coldness of Gloriana's manner, he wished by some sudden attack to surprise her into emotion of one sort or another. He had with this intention enlisted his sister in his service, or rather believed that he had enlisted her, and that she had understood the real motive, in the proposal that he had made to her of going abroad with him for six months—a proposal which had concluded with a faltering—'*in case.*' 'You will be going down to the Cottage this evening,' he added, after a pause; 'you can just mention our plans to them. I want to know particularly what they think of it—what *she* thinks of it, I mean,' he said, raising his head with manly candour—he was not ashamed of his devotion, why should he disguise or deny it? 'I will come in later and bring you home.' Surely this was clear enough; and yet this delicate commission, which a clever woman *not* interested in the result, one way or another, would have managed in the most natural manner in the world, was so wofully bungled in the hands of Miss Levison, who *was* interested perhaps in the non-success of her brother's suit, that it ended in the worst way possible for all parties interested or concerned in the matter. For when the Squire 'dropped in' at the Cottage on that lovely summer's afternoon, in the hope of meeting with an inquiring or even reproachful glance from the violet eyes of the maiden whom he loved so ardently, he was not even favoured with their usual half-shy, half-conscious acknowledgment of his presence; but observed that they were steadily fixed in an opposite and apparently singularly unattractive direction. A cloud seemed to hang, indeed, over the spirits of the party; and while Mrs. Applegarde entertained her hearers with a story that had no beginning, and which did not seem likely to come to an end, two hearts which were struggling with the strength

of their own emotions, had time to settle down into that cold and unlovely reticence—which might be compared to the placing of a mental Chubb's lock upon all the outlets of expression in the soul—so that two statues of stone could not have revealed less, than did the inanimate forms of those whose destinies were trembling in the balance of fate. Ralph was the first to endeavour to place things on a more genial footing between himself, and his fair tenants of the Cottage. 'What do you think of our plan for going abroad during the summer and autumn, Miss Applegarde?' he said, as he joined her suddenly in a shrubbery walk, whither she had wandered, as he fondly hoped, to allow him a 'last appeal.' The words were simple ones; but Gloriana was woman enough to know all that they implied. Raising her beautiful eyes, however, coldly and calmly into her lover's face, she merely replied, '*I think it is a very good one.*' Then there was a short pause; it never occurred to either of them that 'some one might have blundered,' in the delicate commission with which that some one had been so confidingly intrusted. An open explanation, a few kind words, and all might have been well; but in such cases the explanation is never made—the kind word never bestowed. Gloriana's heart was on the point of relenting, as she saw something glitter for a moment in Ralph Levison's eyes; but she was too late—the words she had said could not be recalled; she had accepted that cruel plan, at which her soul rebelled, as 'a *very good* one,' and the thing was done. With a powerful effort, he, too, mastered the emotion which had sharply stung his strong heart, and stretching out his hand, had said, 'Thank you, Gloriana; you have done your best to cure me of my love for you. I will not harass you any more—good-bye;' and before she was aware, he had raised her hand to his lips, and kissed it passionately. After that short interview, when he was gone whom she had loved well, although unconsciously, she thought of the tear she

had seen glittering in his eyes, and knowing what it must have cost him, the remembrance of it poisoned the sources of her life. She pined and drooped, and nobody knew what ailed her but the shrewd London doctor, who read her secret at a glance, and who ordered her at once, as a remedy, something to do, something to think of—and, better than all, something that, above all other things, *he* took an interest in. This last clause was of course nothing more than a lucky hit—even the shrewd doctor's powers of clairvoyance did not reach so far into a millstone as that. The 'exercise upon four legs' had, indeed, turned out a sovereign remedy; for Gloriana had begun to rally from the day that she had her first ride upon the kicking cob. Perhaps a letter received from abroad not long afterwards, from the repentant maiden sister, might have had something to do with her further recovery. '*We* take a great interest,' it said, 'in everything concerning your riding. Ralph wants you to have the Welsh pony, which, he says, is quite quiet, and would carry you beautifully,' &c. &c.; for Ralph had heard that she was ill, and had forgiven even that cruel acquiescence with regard to the advantages of their foreign trip. After these revelations, the reader will not be surprised, that the visit to the Park was an agitating one to Gloriana. It seemed so like 'seeking him,' she thought, 'and yet it must be done because of poor Taffy—and my foolish pride deserves some punishment: it serves me right.'

Ralph Levison was proud also; but he was too generous and manly to let his pride interfere with his feelings of deference towards women—particularly towards unprotected women, like the widow and her two daughters. He was, therefore, on his way to the Cottage, as the sisters were on their way to the Park; and as they exchanged a warm, but rather shy greeting, Gloriana raised her tearful eyes to his face, and said, 'O Mr. Levison, I do not know what to say to you, or how to meet you—poor Taffy is dead. I killed him.'

'*You killed him?*' repeated Mr. Levison, after her; but it would appear as if the pony's death had scarcely affected him to the extent which it ought to have done, for Gloriana was in no haste to remove her hand from his, and if her manner was shy, there was no trace of pride or coldness now.

'Yes, I killed him,' she replied solemnly; 'I gave him too much corn, and brought on inflammation, and I am as sorry that he died as if he had been my brother.'

This confession came out with a sob, and she quite started with surprise when the unlooked-for answer was returned—

'I am glad of it, Gloriana, if our quarrel is to be made up over his grave.'

'Oh! you must not be glad, indeed you must not,' was the eager reply; 'our quarrel was made up long before, and you must not be glad that poor Taffy died.'

Just at that moment Ralph Levison had no other wish but to be glad or sorry, as she was glad or sorry, in whom his heart delighted. It was the happiest moment of his life, and I fear that the memory of Taffy was like a pleasant essence in his nostrils, since it had thrown down the icy barrier of coldness and pride, which had been built up between himself and Gloriana, and established their friendship on the old footing of candour and genial unreserve. From that day there were no more misunderstandings, no more intrusting of important missions to the fatal third party, who invariably bungles in a love affair. Gloriana had found out, through bitter experience, that her own happiness was bound up in that of Ralph Levison's, and he had long been aware of the truth, that his depended entirely upon her; so as a natural consequence, before a week had gone over their heads, it was one of those widely diffused secrets, that every one knows, that the young Squire and Miss Applegarde were engaged to be married.

Miss Levison had unwillingly made up her mind, at last,

that it must come to this; and tried to persuade herself that she had had her brother's happiness at heart, even when she had informed Gloriana, on the important evening described above, that her brother had made up his mind to go abroad, because he was so persecuted by the matrimonial snares which mothers and daughters were laying for his bachelorhood in the county. It was a good trait in her future sister's character, that, although often reproached by her now happy lover, for the cruel coldness of the words which had driven him from her side, she never betrayed his sister's treachery to him; but, on the contrary, did everything in her power to conciliate her, and make her feel as little as possible the difference in position, which her brother's wife would have it in her power to make, if so inclined. 'Let bygones be bygones,' she would say gravely, when the subject was bruited; 'and tell me, Ralph, what am I to ride to-day—Birdseye, or War Eagle, or Hetty, or the O'Donoghue?' for there was hardly a horse in the Park stables that Gloriana had not mounted and ridden, under the auspices of her sporting squire.

'I have ordered War Eagle for you to-day, if you will promise to ride steadily; but she is getting dreadfully wild,' he added, turning to Mrs. Applegarde; 'she will beat me across country soon.'

'I am not afraid as long as you are with her,' was the reply. 'I cannot say that I quite liked her cantering about the country by herself; but James did so set his face against a groom.'

'James is a muff,' replied the reckless Ralph; 'and how he could allow you to be so cheated by that rascal Ned, I can't conceive.'

For the stable expenses during the time of that worthy's reign and rule had been submitted by Mrs. Applegarde to the critical inspection of her future son-in-law. 'My dear lady,' he had remarked, after running his eye down the items, and arriving at the wonderful total, which

the ingenuity of 'Knowing Ned' had run up, 'all I can say is, that you must have been keeping up a hunting establishment at the Cottage during my absence: how many breakfasts have you given to the hunt? and when did you pay up your last subscription to the hounds?'

'Was it not shameful?' said Gloriana, with her face in a glow. 'I could have forgiven him all that, though, if he had not made me believe that I killed Taffy; but that was really sinful.'

'Here comes War Eagle,' said Kate, who had been on the watch; and the stately horse came stepping like a stag down the Park glade. 'He is a real beauty. O Glorry! I envy you your ride to-day, and only wish that I had the courage to get upon a horse's back.'

'We must teach you,' said her future brother; 'but how is it, Kate, that you are such a little coward, when Glorry is afraid of nothing?'

'I remember when she was afraid of you,' said Kate, who never missed a favourable opportunity for repartee; 'and where is your chair,' she added saucily to her sister, as War Eagle exhibited signs of impatience, and began some stately curveting at the door, 'to help you to *get up*, you know, as Wells used to say?'

Gloriana frowned slightly at the merry girl, to deprecate all chaff in the presence of the grooms, and poising her foot lightly in Ralph's hand, the getting up was easily disposed of; in a second she was in the saddle, and appeasing the impatience of War Eagle by patting him on his glossy neck, and speaking to him low honeyed words of love and admiration, to which he seemed to listen with the condescension of a prince of the blood. War Eagle was a powerful, thorough-bred horse, and as he bounded with long strides over the elastic turf, his nostrils dilated, and his eye flashed, and he looked as if his untamed spirit would prove too much for the girlish form and slender hands of his rider to subdue. Equal to the occasion, how-

ever, Gloriana's colour rose, and eager with excitement and with her own overflowing happiness, she exclaimed—

'Oh! let me take him over something, Ralph; you know you promised that I should.'

'I don't know,' was the reply; 'he is pulling you enough as it is: he gets mad sometimes when he thinks that he is to go.'

'So do I; let us go together. There is a nice little fence that I used to take Taffy over, just at the end of the glade; just this once, Ralph, please,' she added coaxingly; and receiving no positive injunction to the contrary, she rode steadily on in the direction of the fence.

'Don't interfere with him,' was all the caution she received; 'he'll do it himself.'

The good horse, indeed, wanted no hint that his rider could give him on the subject; he dropped gently on the other side of the fence, with his fair burden safe on his back.

'Oh, it is glorious!' she exclaimed, as she followed Ralph upon Birdseye, across the open fallow. 'Oh! I should enjoy a day with the hounds.'

'That is what I was afraid of,' said the young Squire gravely; and he will perhaps be set down as very strait-laced and particular by his sporting brethren, when I admit that, with all his own love of sport, and admiration of courage in men and women, he disliked the idea of seeing young, gentle, refined women *habituées* of the hunting-field. 'That is what I was afraid of,' he said; and then he added still more seriously, 'Gloriana, you will oblige me very much if you will never ask me to let you hunt—you know I can refuse you nothing.'

'I will never mention the subject again, if you dislike it,' she replied; 'but I thought you would have liked it—that is, if you knew that I could ride.' This she said doubtfully, and inquiringly—she thought that his remark contained an imputation upon her riding—and feeling herself a novice in the art, she was perhaps a little hurt.

'It is because I think you ride so well, that I should dislike it for you. I could not bear to have *you* the object of vulgar admiration and comment. Do you understand me now, Glorry?'

'I do, indeed, and I should dislike it above all things myself,' she said, blushing at the very idea.

'I cannot fancy either you or Kate ever becoming fast young ladies; you would not have believed that of me, perhaps, who am a sportsman to the backbone; but masculine women are my favourite aversion. I should have offered you War Eagle before now,' he added; 'but he does not come up to my standard of a lady's horse—he requires too much strength for graceful riding.'

'He does, indeed,' said Gloriana, who had found during the last gallop, that he was rather too much for her; 'he is quite quiet, but very hard to hold.'

The words were scarcely uttered, before the horse, starting at a man in a hedge-row, broke away with Gloriana, and proceeded with great strides across the open meadow, in the direction of a wide brook that ran through it. He was not going at his full speed, but he was running away, inasmuch as she could not stop him. She did not, however, lose her nerve or her presence of mind; but turning her head, she said to Ralph, who kept a little in the wake, knowing what the horse was when he was collared—

'I am not frightened; but I can't hold him. Will he jump the brook?'

'Yes; give him his head, and let him go; then pull him with all your strength, and turn his head towards me.'

Gloriana obeyed these instructions carefully, and no sooner found herself safe on the other side, than with a final effort she pulled the gallant horse round, while Birdseye, gallantly clearing the brook also, brought Ralph to her rescue, who caught her bridle at once in his firm and



Drawn by 'Phiz.'] [See p. 60.

GLORIANA TAKING THE BROOK.

secure grasp. The next moment she was lifted gently but quickly to the ground.

'We must change saddles,' Ralph said, his own face pale as death, while Gloriana's was glowing with pleasure and excitement. 'You have proved your courage sufficiently now, and your seat too. Well done, Gloriana!' he added, warming now that the fright was over. 'You are worthy of your name; that brook has turned half a field of good riders before now.'

'Has it?' she replied innocently; 'I should like to do it again; it was only like a very long stride.'

'No, thank you. I must say that in cold blood I should prefer the bridge,' said Ralph, laughing; and as they rode home, he said, 'Your adventures in search of a horse have been very amusing, Glorry; but I hope they are nearly over now.'

The following day was Gloriana's nineteenth birthday, and this family secret had of course been betrayed to one so nearly interested as Ralph Levison. He had a present in store for the lady of his love, of which she had not the most distant idea. The secret had been well kept, for the simple reason that it had been confided to no one. The young Squire was rich and generous, and it was not likely that he would withhold his lavish hand, when money could purchase enjoyment for one he so dearly loved. 'My present is the *last*, but not in one sense of the word the *least*,' he said, after heartily congratulating the young heroine of the day. 'Come to the door, Glorry, and tell me what you think of the Paragon. He's the best that can be obtained for love or money, only,' he added, turning laughingly to Kate, 'he *won't* stand a chair; and if his "strength lies in his head" it is concentrated into a very small space.' This last remark was for the especial benefit of Mr. Wells, who was no longer the only male prop of the Applegarde family. He felt the loss of position severely; but the splendour of the match, which his beloved

young mistress was about to make, acted as balm to his wounded heart; and although he winced a little under the railleries of the Squire, he yielded the palm to him with a pretty good grace, as far, at least, as horses were concerned. There is nothing more to be said of Paragon than that he was perfection, as his name implied. Perfect in his paces, with the courage of a lion and the gentleness of a dove; his mouth, his temper, his shape, his legs, his head, his eyes, his mane, his tail, his colour, his pedigree—all made him worthy of his name and of his mistress; who, as she turned, in the exuberance of her joy, to thank her lover for his munificent gift, said, 'Oh! what a dear old man was Sir Erasmus when he ordered me exercise upon four legs: and what a divine horse was Brutus, who, when he kicked me off on the common, commenced a series of adventures, which have ended,' she added softly, and with eyes beaming with affection, 'which have ended in Paragon and *you*.'

THE SPORTING ADVENTURES OF MR. FELIX.

I.

THE LAST RUN WITH THE HARRIERS.

It was the very day after one Christmas, when all England had a bilious headache, and Napoleon, had he but known the proper time, might have come over, landed, conquered, and dictated a new *coup d'état* from Windsor Castle, that Mr. Samuel Felix found himself the possessor of 4000*l.* a year. I saw it in his face. Hitherto, it must be said, Mr. Felix had never been an interesting person. He had a poor wit. He had neither a good wine-cellar nor a pretty sister, and how therefore was he to win the respect of his fellow-men? But on this morning his dull dry countenance underwent a sort of transfiguration. When he told me of his good fortune he became quite lovely in my eyes; he was no more plain Mr. Felix, of Great Tower-street, but a noble and handsome gentleman, whom any one might be proud to know.

With a gushing generosity of confidence he flew into a recital of what he was about to do with his newly-discovered treasure. He would buy a house in Kent; he would go off to a wine-merchant's that very day; he would take in the *Field;* he would purchase a stud, but would begin by buying a first-rate hunter. Now there is nothing in which an unwary man may be so easily swindled as in buying a horse, and so, out of pure good-nature, I sold him one of mine.

Mr. Felix assumed the *rôle* of a country gentleman

with a charming dexterity; but pressure of legal business and other matters prevented his going out with the hounds so soon as he would have wished. Towards the end of February, however, I received intimation that I might send down the horse I had sold him, for that he meant to go out with Lord Switchem's harriers the last day of the season; and could I get myself another mount, he asked, and remain over night at the Beeches? Now as I had invested the money paid me by Mr. Felix for my former horse in the purchase of another a trifle better—perhaps one might say a good deal better—there was no difficulty about the mount; and so at an early hour on that fresh March morning, I rode past Mr. Felix's lodge and up to the hall-door of the Beeches. My friend showed me over the house with a graceful and blushing modesty, for as yet he was not quite accustomed to the grandeur of the place, and at ten o'clock the horses were ordered to be brought round.

The meet was at half-past ten. Mr. Felix, with a brand-new whip in his hand, went out to look at the hunter, and pretended to regard him with a calmly critical air.

'Good long pastern,' he said, with a judicious nod of approval.

Bobby turned round, with that big, black, full eye of his, to look at his new master, and it seemed to me then that my friend was a little nervous. He went forward and patted the animal's neck, and called him a poor old man and a good old man, while the groom stood by, evidently wondering at the delay. Mr. Felix looked all over the horse again; he again patted his horse's neck and addressed him as 'poor old Bobby;' then he discovered something wrong with the handle of his whip.

A thought struck me. Had Mr. Felix never ridden before? or was I to be the innocent cause of his death? He began to caress the animal in quite a hysterical way, with a vain effort to conceal his agitation. Perhaps, too,

I thought, Mr. Felix had not made his will, and at this moment Mrs. Felix, a rosy little lady, came to the window to smile a farewell to her lord. *A farewell!* I turned away: I dared not look that simple creature in the face.

But at length he managed to struggle into the saddle, and away we rode. Over the hill and down again, and lo! before us, far over the fresh green plain, were a number of minute dark specks that moved hither and thither in the yellow mist of sunshine. As we drew nearer the mass of riders increased; we saw the whip flourishing his white leather thong, and keeping guard over that straying cluster of speckled dogs which, in despite of him, would sniff about the common, to the amazement of certain long-necked snowy geese. The sight inspired Mr. Felix. He seemed to forget the uncomfortable bobbing in the saddle which he was enduring. He became quite radiant and enthusiastic.

'What a morning!' he cried, with an incautious flourish of his whip, which made Bobby swerve, to my friend's evident terror. 'Look at the light along these hills! And the hedges, how green they are! By Jove! I believe I could smell these wild flowers half a mile off. See! that is Lord Switchem, he with the green coat, on the roan. And there are his two daughters, in front of that old squire. Isn't the youngest a splendid-looking gell?—full, fine-blown, pink English face, such as you see in magazines, you know; and how she sits her horse, to be sure! And do you think this old Bobby'll go well?'

My friend's garrulous simplicity was making him forgetful. Bobby threw up his head at a bit of newspaper lying in the road, and, but for a lucky snatch at the mane, Mr. Felix would have been in the road also. As he shoved himself back in his saddle, he threw a hasty glance towards the ladies to see if they had witnessed the mishap—the ridiculous old fop that he was.

Brisk and lively indeed was the scene in front of the

inn—gentlemen dismounting from their dog-carts; two or three rather fresh horses prancing on their hind legs and spattering about the turf of the common; the master saluting his friends as they arrived; the ladies walking their horses up and down to show the full sweep of their gored skirts; one or two thirsty or timorous riders passing into the inn for a thimbleful of 'jumping-powder;' the whip flicking at this or that stray hound which had so little self-respect as to claim acquaintance with a ragged and forlorn-looking cur that had come out to see the show. Mr. Felix rode up to shake hands with Lord Switchem, the tall, thin, spare man with the keen gray eye and eagle beak. His lordship made a little joke, and Mr. Felix in vain attempted to smile, his face being filled with alarm at a certain friskiness which Bobby was beginning to exhibit. My friend then lifted his hat in a graceful manner to the two ladies, and came back in happy unconsciousness of the singular appearance of his elbows and legs.

Then away we went up the nearest lane, the whip still keeping in sore restraint these dappled heads and flickering sterns, until the master abruptly rode his horse up a bank on the left, the dogs following him into a long undulating turnip-field. When we were all in the field I noticed that on Mr. Felix's face there dwelt a singular solemnity. Presently he rode over to me and said—

'If I see a hare what must I do?'

'Keep with the hounds, and they'll see her as soon as you will. And mind, if you ride down any of the dogs, Lord Switchem may perhaps use discourteous language.'

I lost sight of Mr. Felix then; but in a few moments I had my attention called to him by hearing an unearthly halloo.

'There she goes!' he shrieked, pointing to a rabbit which one of the dogs, having unearthed, seemed inclined to follow.

The pack wheeled round in obedience to the cry, and doubtless he thought he had done something fine, when a frightful torrent of execration was heard, and Lord Switchem, in a furious passion, rode by. The whip, too, quite as incensed, but only grumbling the oaths his master uttered, rode at the hound which had led astray the others, and, coming down with the full force of his arm, curled the lithe leather thong round her body. Then there was a yell.

'Why, what do you mean?' cried Felix, shocked at such cruelty.

'Didn't you see it was a rabbit? and you set the whole pack astray,' said another rider, in accents of bitter scorn, the whip being too angry, or too prudent, to reply.

'It was the dog's fault, not mine,' grumbled Felix to me; but there was a great blush of shame on his face, and he willingly fell to the rear.

The dogs, having been recalled to their duty, began to scour the field once more, and in a very few moments they simultaneously lifted up their voice and sent forth the joyful cry. Moved by a sudden instinct, the hounds closed into a dense compact body, and darted off with that sharp plaintive howl. Here and there a horse, grown instantaneously mad with the piping of the shrill music, carried his rider headlong down the slope at a pace which was certainly uncomfortable over the superterranean turnips; while the hare, running almost in a straight line, crossed the road at the foot of the incline and went straight up the opposite hill. Here I lost sight of Mr. Felix. There was a nasty bit of hedge at the foot of the turnip-field, which the two ladies took beautifully; but I knew that Mr. Felix, if he had the least regard for his wife, and if Bobby would allow him, would find some other method of egress.

And how well the dogs ran! You could have covered them with a blanket, as the sporting correspondents say.

But the hare, having been headed, doubled round the hill and made for the road again, not a few laggard riders profiting by her resolution. Now where was Mr. Felix? Neither he nor Bobby was within sight, and surely there had been nothing to prevent his at least gaining upon the dogs on their return. On reaching the road the pack suddenly found themselves at fault; the hare having taken a sharp turn to the right, they had overrun the scent, but immediately spreading themselves out, they worked about both hedges, their noses to the ground and their white sterns wagging in and out the thick briers, while the whip kept keen watch for the first recovery of the trail. And, as it happened, a certain Bessy again gave tongue, receiving the warm commendation of her master as she led her companions off in pursuit.

The hare had evidently made for the turnip-field where we had first found her; and just as the hounds, in full cry, were struggling up the bank and leaping the hedge, what should jump clean into the road but Bobby!

He was riderless. There was a little titter of laughter among the men, for presently Mr. Felix walked up to the hedge and looked over.

'Make him jump back,' said he piteously, seeing that the other riders were now half way up the turnip-field.

'Come along, and take your horse.'

'I can't,' he said, apparently almost ready to cry; 'I shall lose the place where my whip dropped; I am sure it was here. And I sha'n't try to ride again over these turnips.'

'Are you going home, then?'

He quietly disappeared, leaving me in charge of Bobby. Suddenly, however, I heard a shout from him.

'Oh! by Jove, here they come—straight down on me—what am I to do?'

The cry of the hounds was coming nearer and still nearer, until, a few feet on the other side of the hedge, there

rose the shrill 'squeak! squeak!' of the hare being killed. I left Bobby to his fate, and rode up the bank and through the nearest gap. Here a pretty picture presented itself. Mr. Felix, half-dead with terror, and not daring to move lest the maddened dogs should fly at him, was standing and looking at them worrying the hare from mouth to mouth, while Lord Switchem, riding down the hill, and followed by the whole field, was shouting to him to seize the killed hare from the hounds. Indeed, by the time I had rescued the bleeding carcass there was little need for the master to cut it open.

'Shall we send the hare round to your house, Mr. Felix?' said Lord Switchem pleasantly, while there was a great burst of laughter from the 'field;' and, indeed, a more pitiable object than my friend, standing there among the hounds, it was not often their lot to see.

'Why didn't you tell me what I ought to have done?' said Felix, quite savagely, as he caught Bobby, and mounted. 'You don't expect that one learns to hunt hares in Cheapside?'

It was useless to point out the fact that I had never undertaken to be his preceptor in these matters, for now every one was hastening to overtake the hounds, which were already drawing a low piece of meadow some five hundred yards off. Before we could reach the ground the hounds were in cry; but as the hare went straight away over several tracts of meadow land, we were ere long up with the crowd. She led the dogs down to a long low clump of alders lying beside a broad but not very deep stream, and here the scent was lost. There ensued five minutes of painful uncertainty. Part of the field kept hovering about the corner of the meadow; the others crossed the stream by a ford, and struggled through the alders to the opposite corner of the cover. Now, Lord Switchem was in the former group, and we distinctly saw him pass, without recognition, a tall, fair-mustachioed

young gentleman who stood by a stile, a shotbelt over his shoulder, a gun in his hand, and a large brown retriever at his feet. Not dreaming that we were likely to intrude upon a private conversation, Mr. Felix and I rode up to reconnoitre the ford, and, in so doing, found that we were closely followed by Lord Switchem's youngest daughter, who, drawing near to the young gentleman who was leaning against the stile, said rapidly to him—

'Und gehst du heute Abend fort?'

'Ja wohl, Liebschen,' said this person, in an under tone; 'komme aber um neun Uhr.'

'Hier?'

He nodded in reply, and she turned to look after her sister, as though she had been diligently observing the water.

'I say,' said Felix, 'what did that fellow say to her just now?'

'He remarked that elderly gentlemen had no business to pry into lovers' secrets.'

'That's your fun,' said Felix, with a sneer; 'but hark! there go the dogs again; and see! they are making across the field yonder.'

So there was nothing for it but a simultaneous rush to the ford. The younger lady, gracefully lifting up the skirt of her habit, and not even looking at the young gentleman, urged her horse into the stream, notwithstanding that it tried to stand and paw the water with its fore-foot.

'Now, Mr. Felix,' said some one, 'come along.'

But a slight cry escaped the lips of my friend, and, turning, I just caught sight of him slipping off the saddle, as Bobby, right in the middle of the stream, began to rear up on his hind legs. The next moment Mr. Felix was in the water, whence he emerged puffing and snorting like a hippopotamus; while Bobby, tempted by the current, was rapidly making his way down the bed of the river.

With two or three furious plunges Felix succeeded in overtaking him and laying hold of the bridle.

'You ought to be ashamed of yourself,' he cried, in a magnificent rage, 'sitting laughing there, when it is all owing to your having sold me a horse which no one could ride. Perhaps you think it fun. I don't; and in the City we would call the transaction by a harder name.'

'My dear sir,' I observed, 'I did not bargain to teach you riding, as well as give you a horse, for sixty guineas; and as you don't seem to want my looking after you, I'll bid you good-day.'

'Oh! I say,' cried Mr. Felix, in despair, 'wait a minute! Wouldn't I do as much for you? You've no more conscience than a wild bear; and it *is* all owing to your confounded horse.'

Unfortunately, when he did manage to lay hold of the bridle, there was no place on either side of the stream for him to land, and he was therefore under the necessity of walking against the current, Bobby very unwillingly following. I soon discovered that my friend's tone of plaintive entreaty was but a guise; for so soon as he was again mounted he began 'nagging' as before.

'Serves me right for buying a horse without having tried him first. I daresay you fellows think it rather fine to palm off a vicious horse. Hem! I don't. Men of principle don't. And now, you see, they're all away before us; and I've made myself ridiculous before the whole field.'

'There I quite agree with you.'

'Do you? Do you mean to say that one man of the lot could ride this horse?'

'Why, a baby could ride him.'

'But I'm not a baby: and now, I suppose, as they are two or three miles away, we had better go home.'

Mr. Felix was interrupted by the long yelping whine of the dogs, which were clearly coming down again to the alders, and two minutes thereafter—we standing in perfect

stillness—the hare leaped from a low bank and took the water gallantly. Louder and louder grew the cry of the hounds in the resonant wood, nearer and nearer came the sound of crackling branches and trampled leaves, and now the hare had just reached the opposite bank.

'Oh! by Jove, she'll escape!' shouted Felix, as, oblivious of consequences, he spurred Bobby forward and made a great cut at the hare with his long whip.

'Hold hard!' I yelled to him; and the next moment the dogs had simultaneously dashed into the water, spluttered or swum across, and were up the opposite bank and through the dried white rushes. The hare took to the open, the dogs some thirty yards behind, and 'Now,' I cried to Felix, 'there is a chance for you.'

We were several seconds in advance of the others, who were as yet struggling through the swamp to reach the ford, and Mr. Felix fairly laughed out with pleasure. How he managed to stick on I know not; for Bobby, warming to the work, was determined to have a run, whether with a rider or without. 'Hurrah!' shouted Felix, as he gallantly leaped a small drain about two feet wide, and again urged on his mad career. Several of the others had now overtaken him, however, and pretty much in a line they were approaching a ditch which was broad enough and deep enough to make several of the older hands look out for a safe place. The younger of the two ladies was the first to make the attempt, and her horse refused.

'Shall I give you a lead?' said Felix, who was close behind her.

Was he suddenly grown insane? Had the dip in the river, and the subsequent reaction, produced a fever? Whether he shut his eyes or not I cannot say; but he rode full tilt at the ditch. Bobby landed with his fore-feet well planted, but his hind-feet slipped in the soft mud, and my friend went straight as an arrow over his head, turned a somersault, and found himself lying in the field on his back.

Felix got up, looked about him for a second in a bewildered manner, and the next second was again in the saddle. Had he been less dazed, he would have noticed, on rising, that two of his fellow-creatures had similarly come to grief, and that a smaller boy, who had been riding a small pony, was just then creeping out of the water like a half-drowned rat.

The hounds having overrun the scent near the border of a small plantation allowed the riders to gather together again.

'I was not the only one,' said Felix, coming proudly up.

'How the only one?'

'There were several tumbled off, and I was the first to get mounted again,' he said, with a fine enthusiasm mantling in his cheek; 'and, I say, this horse you sold me goes wonderfully. He's a perfect jewel. You know I don't feel quite at home on a horse while he's trotting; but in full gallop I sit as easily as in an arm-chair; and you just see when we get a good run again!'

Mr. Felix was certainly in a state of considerable excitement. It was clear to me that he was quite forgetful of Mrs. Felix—*venator teneræ conjugis immemor*—and determined, irrespective of results, to signalise himself in the last run of the season. Not to speak of Lord Switchem—whose acquaintance he had succeeded with considerable difficulty in making—there were the whole of his neighbours whom he wished to impress with a sense of his equestrian proficiency; and it is hard to say how much a man will risk in endeavouring to prove himself a grand cavalier. Mr. Felix kept flourishing his hunting-whip; he patted Bobby's neck and spoke to him encouragingly; he began to talk scientifically about the state of the weather being adverse to the lying of the scent. One would have thought that Mr. Felix had become a 'thistle-whipper' immediately on leaving his cradle.

The hounds at length started another hare, and were

presently in full cry after her across the meadows. Mr. Felix was now determined to show fight. His misfortune at the ditch having terminated without breakage of bone was only an additional incentive, and Bobby very soon replied to his admonitions of whip and spur by putting on full steam. Away they went, over the fine level ground, until it seemed to me that Bobby was exercising his own choice of speed and path somewhat markedly. Away they went, by stream, and ditch, and field, while Mr. Felix, ahead of all his companions, was close upon the hounds. It was a beautiful run. If my friend had purposely come out to astonish his bucolic acquaintances with the spirit of a City man, he could not have led off more brilliantly, everything being in his favour. At the same time it must be confessed that Mr. Felix, leaning back in the saddle, seemed making futile but vigorous efforts to restrain his steed, though the distance he speedily put between himself and me soon prevented the possibility of my judging.

The dogs were now going down hill, Mr. Felix being far ahead of the rest of the field. I caught a glimpse of the speckled heads and legs struggling through or jumping over a low quickset hedge, and at the same moment saw Bobby rise high into the air. The next moment the whole disappeared; there was a shrill shriek above the cry of the dogs; that cry ceased, and there was nothing heard but the clattering of hoofs on the damp meadow land.

And what was this next sound? Surely it could not be Lord Switchem who was using such horrible language, denouncing Mr. Felix, and himself, and everybody and everything in terms which might have made a prizefighter turn pale.

As I arrived at the hedge and looked over, a singular tableau was spread out before me. Mr. Felix was on foot, disconsolately wiping the mud off his new coat; Bobby was half a mile off, at full gallop; Lord Switchem's favourite

hound, Bessy, lay dead on the bank; and his lordship was in a passion, which made his thin dry face as hot as fire. Let me draw a veil over that sad consummation of the day's sport; the hare had been killed, and the field were willing to return home.

When Bobby had been caught and restored to his rider, Mr. Felix observed to me—

'I consider Lord Switchem a most ungentlemanly man. I say he is no gentleman. But let him rave as he likes; it is the last day of the season, and what should I care? I will avoid, however, for the future, one who has as little command over his tongue as over his temper.'

When Mr. Felix returned home he was quite triumphant in his tone. He informed the rosy little lady that they had killed two hares, and that he had witnessed the death of both. Mrs. Felix was quite charmed with this new proof of the grandeur and power of her husband.

'And that horse of yours,' said Felix, 'is quite a trump. And, I say, which champagne do you prefer—Clicquot, or Collin, or Moet?'

II.

THE LAST RUN WITH THE STAGHOUNDS.

THE infatuation of woman! No sooner was Mrs. Felix made aware of her husband's prowess in the field than she insisted on his hunting something better than a poor little hare. She began to read up encyclopædias on all matters concerning the ancient sports of England. She busied herself with the history of the Henries to find how often they went royally chasing the deer. She compelled Felix to order a scarlet coat; and set her eldest girl—that poor little mite of a thing with a chirping voice so unlike the resonant organ of her mother—to sing 'Old Towler.' She

was indignant at the pusillanimity of her husband in not adding his uncertain bass to the chorus,

'This day a stag must die;'

but he escaped by observing that the air was set rather high for him.

Felix, on the other hand, was by no means loth to cease his connection with the 'thistle-whippers.' After having killed Lord Switchem's best hound, he had no particular wish to see either the pack or his lordship again; and as a keen barbaric desire to hunt and kill was growing up in his respectable citizen soul, my friend turned his attention to the staghounds. He became acquainted with some gentlemen of the nearest hunt; he talked of a big subscription; he made, without seeking my advice, large additions to his stables (a circumstance which had nearly sundered our friendship); and at length, having been asked to a breakfast which was to celebrate a grand meet in the south of Kent, he got Mr. Wheatear to include me in the invitation, and together we went.

The meet was somewhere about eighteen miles from the Beeches; and as we had to send our horses on the previous evening down to the nearest village, I had no opportunity of criticising in a friendly manner the new purchase which Mr. Felix proposed to ride. Next morning, however, saw my friend's wagonette drive round to the door of his house; and I had the pleasure of witnessing Mrs. Felix, in the utmost gorgeousness of her attire, superintend the disposition of the whole of her children inside the vehicle. She had come forth to witness the achievments of her lord. She had just discovered that Alfred the Great was a famous hunter, and that Edward the Confessor dearly loved to follow a pack of hounds; and she was striving to determine whether she would liken Mr. Felix to Sir Walter Tyrrell when her husband took the reins in his right hand, the whip in his left, the groom let the horse's head go free, and away we went.

But we had not gone twenty yards when Mr. Felix, fumbling with the reins, had taken the off wheels of the wagonette on to the lawn. He wrenched at the horse's mouth; down they came again with a bang upon the path; the horse stood upright on his hind legs for several seconds, and had nearly thrown Mrs. Felix out; then he set off with a great clatter along the gravelled avenue. Felix flung the whip into the road, and held on by the reins with both hands; but the next moment there was a terrific crash, the wooden post of the gate was hurled down, Mrs. Felix was tilted over upon her four children, while her husband, suddenly resolving to sacrifice his dignity in order to secure the safety of his neck, besought me to add my strength to his in holding the reins. But the horse was in reality no fire-eater, although Mrs. Felix, so soon as he was quieted, hysterically insisted upon her husband selling him off-hand for twenty pounds; while she kept her arms outstretched in a fluttering manner over her children. Felix, with his white lips and trembling fingers, looked as though he would have parted with him for ten; and with a great and rather comical effort to appear self-possessed, asked if I would 'take the reins a bit until he lit a cigar.' I took the reins, and he lit the cigar; but as he showed no signs of eagerness to have them back again I changed seats with him, and we placidly drove down the long, quiet, undulating, and not unpicturesque road which here cuts Kent into east and west.

'Oh,' he suddenly cried, 'what have I done with the whip?'

'The last I saw of it,' I replied, 'was the crop sticking out of a laurel-bush. People generally do find a whip held in the left hand rather in the way.'

'Of course,' he said, with a look of indifference, but with a rosy blush—'of course I held it there until I should settle in my seat, only that ugly brute broke away without giving me a chance.'

And as we passed through the quaint little villages and along the pleasant country lanes, symptoms of the coming hunt began to show themselves. It was to be a very fine affair, and all the country-side had come out to see the show. Vehicles of every description crept up hill and rumbled down dale in the one direction; people came out from the cottages and houses and took the same way; gentlemen on horseback trotted peacefully by, taking as little as possible out of their animals. Then the morning, which had been rather dismal, gave promise of better weather; and as a few faint shafts of misty light broke through the dense dull gray of the south, Mrs. Felix brightened up wonderfully, and vowed the scenery was finer than any photographs of Switzerland she had ever seen.

Felix did not seem so enthusiastic.

'How many people would be on horseback, did you say?' he asked.

'Probably over two hundred.'

'And many spectators?'

'Half a mile of them: every one a keen critic, from the ladies in their carriages to the clodhoppers along the hedges.'

'Well,' said he, almost savagely, 'you may talk of the fun of putting up hurdles for people to jump in presence of all that crowd; but I don't see it. I say there are plenty of hedges and ditches and streams to be jumped without adding artificial dangers to the hunt.'

'But a baby could jump them.'

'I told you before I wasn't a baby, and if a baby could jump them what's the use of putting them up?'

'For the amusement of the spectators.'

'What you call amusement I suppose means a lot of the riders—perhaps fathers of families—tumbling and breaking their necks. That may be amusement; but I shouldn't think it was for the children who were left orphans.'

Mr. Felix spoke quite bitterly, addressing me as if I had been busy all night in putting up these frail lines of fences. Indeed his wife was shocked by this exhibition of a morbid dread, and rebuked him severely.

'When the Norman princes went out hunting,' she observed, 'they not only risked a fall from their horse, but also being attacked by a hart at bay, and being shot by an arrow into the bargain.'

'But I'm not a Norman prince,' said he sulkily. 'The Norman princes were a lot of thieves, and I wish they had stayed at home.'

Now this was a cruel blow to Mrs. Felix; for not only had she a strong liking for all sportsman-princes, but some friend of hers had further assured her that the name of Felix was an old and honourable one, and that an application to Heralds' College would certainly secure to her husband the possession of a noble ancestry and a neat crest—perhaps with the motto, 'Felix, qui potuit.' The discussion, however, was lost in our approach to Mr. Wheatear's house—a tall peaked building of red brick which stood some distance down a by-road. At the point where this road joined the main road stood a large inn; and here were congregated such clusters of carriages waiting for sheds, horses waiting for stabling, servants waiting for their masters, and idlers of all descriptions as to wholly block up the thoroughfare. In vain Mr. Felix looked out for his man. Horses there were of every shape and colour, and grooms of all sizes and ages; but there was no trace of the right groom and the right horse. Finally it was arranged that I should drive Mrs. Felix to a good position on the by-road, whence she might see her husband's first dash away after the hounds, while he went in quest of his steed.

Already half a mile of this road was occupied by carriages placed near to the hedge, and overlooking the course which had been chalked out for the deer. Thicker

clusters, however, were around those positions whence a good view of the jumping could be obtained; for across Mr. Wheatear's meadows stretched two long low lines of hurdles, over which all intending huntsmen were expected to leap. Presently Mr. Felix, coming up, brought with him his groom, who was now appointed to look after the wagonette horse, lest Mrs. Felix should be frightened during the interval in which her husband would be at breakfast.

As we slowly wriggled between carriage-wheels and horses' legs, on our way back to Mr. Wheatear's house, it was plain that Felix was very nervous and not a little angry.

'It's all very well,' said he; 'but I don't believe in gentlemen being trotted out like circus-riders for the benefit of a lot of ploughmen. I say it isn't sport at all. I wonder they haven't two or three clowns to make jokes; and it's a pity the meadows aren't laid with sawdust.'

'And would you have those ladies drive all this way for nothing? Surely they ought to see a little bit of the run.'

'I wish the ladies would stay at home and mind their own business,' said he snappishly. 'A woman even looks better sitting at a sewing-machine, making ridiculous cotton gowns, than sitting in an open carriage and gaping like a fool at what she doesn't understand.'

I could not account for this sudden acerbity on the part of the gentlest of men. But cold fowl and champagne sweeten the temper wonderfully. As we wormed our way through the crowd that had gathered in Mr. Wheatear's front garden, and squeezed ourselves into places at the breakfast-table, I observed that a milder influence began to dawn upon my friend's face. He was particularly polite in passing things to the master of the hounds, who was within arm's-length of him. He laughed merrily at Mr. Wheatear's joke about the spotless scarlet of his coat—a

joke that had done service in welcoming strangers when Mr. Wheatear was a gawky lad who hung about the doors of his father's big room on occasions like the present. There was another gentleman to whom Mr. Felix was profusely civil, handing him all manner of unnecessary condiments and superfluous dishes, which the stranger was courteous enough to pretend to use. He, my friend afterwards, with an awe-struck air, informed me, was the Duc de ——, who never missed Mr. Wheatear's meet.

As the champagne flowed more and more freely Mr. Felix grew more and more courageous. He said that, after all, there was something noble in hunting a stag—something finer than in prowling about hedges for a miserable hare. As the gentlemen rose in turn to propose the health of the master of the hounds, the giver of the breakfast, and everybody and everything connected with the hunt, Mr. Felix applauded the speeches in a very vehement manner, and informed me privately that 'if it wasn't for fear of the shorthand-writer who was taking notes, he would like to propose the health of Mr. Wheatear a second time on behalf of the strangers present.'

It seemed to me that Felix, in company with several others, was rather unsteady in his movements in going out of doors; but in the universal scrimmage of looking for horses and mounting, this may have been caused by excitement.

'How do you like my coat?' he said, with a watery smile. 'Isn't it a good shade? Oh, there are our horses. That's my new horse, the white one. C——, come here. Charlie!'

Charlie was a white animal, with a highly-curved neck, a singular tail, and sleepy eyes. He looked as though the shafts of a cart would be no unfamiliar object to him.

'What do you think I gave for him?' he asked.

'Twenty-five pounds.'

'That's all *you* know about horses,' he said contemptuously, as he struggled into the saddle.

At length the deer-cart, which had slowly come along the road, was driven through a gap in the hedge into the meadow fronting Wheatear's house; and immediately thereafter a dense stream of horsemen poured through the same passage. The latter arranged themselves in two irregular rows, stretching across the whole breadth of the meadow, and waited to see the stag turned out of that cumbrous prison-van-looking vehicle. We heard the heavy gates being swung open, and presently a timid little light-gray creature leaped gently out, and, turning completely round, first looked quietly into the cart, and then calmly regarded us.

'There he is! there he is!' shouted everybody.

'Where? where?' cried Felix, gazing wildly around.

'There, in front of you,' I said to him.

'That's a donkey,' said he, peering with half-shut eyes; 'that isn't a stag.'

'It's all the stag you'll get, sir,' said his neighbour on the other side, apparently offended by Felix's contemptuous observations.

'Where are his horns, then?'

The man turned away his head. He evidently thought that a person who asked for the sawn-off antlers of a stag was not worthy of an answer.

Meanwhile the pretty little animal which was the object of so much attention turned his head away from us, and took a peep at the long line of carriages and people on the road. Then he looked at the other side of the meadow, which was bounded by a row of trees; and finally, having made up his mind to quit this brilliant company, he composedly trotted away westward. Lightly and gracefully he hopped over the first hurdle, with a fine artistic absence of effort, and continued his course. The second hurdle was passed in the same manner, and then

he broke into a little canter. Suddenly he stopped and turned round.

'He's waiting to give the dogs a chance,' said one.

'He's wondering why we don't follow,' said another.

The crowd roared and cheered, some out of derision, others to hasten him on his course; and as he heard this unmusical bray of human voices he set off at a light gallop, and with a fine high leap cleared a rather broad stream which crossed his path. We could now but catch glimpses of his gray fur shooting past avenues among the distant trees, appearing for a moment on high ground, and then dipping into some hollow, until he seemed to alter his line of route and go away to the south. At this moment a large number of renegades, wishing to shirk the hurdles and overtake the hounds by a cross-cut, retired from the meadow and took to the main road, which led pretty much in the direction the stag was supposed to have taken.

'Don't you think we should go with them?' said Felix to me, very timidly.

'But what would Mrs. Felix think of you?' I said.

'True,' he replied, rather mournfully; 'I had forgotten her.'

Then he burst into a somewhat forced laugh.

'What's a tumble, after all!' he cried.

'Oh, nothing.'

'Besides, Charlie is said to be a nice easy jumper—comes down with all his feet at once on the other side. I say, haven't these ten minutes expired yet? I don't consider it proper to give the deer so great a start; it is cruelty to the horses to put such a strain upon them.'

The ten minutes had just expired when the dogs were turned into the meadow. Almost immediately they hit off the scent, and, with a joyful cry, were across the field and clambering over the first hurdle, whither the two lines of horsemen straightway followed them. Felix cast

one look in the direction of his wife and children, and, with his teeth set hard, pressed into the heart of the great, rushing, noisy throng that now went full tilt at the artificial fence. Over they went, one here and there striking heavily on the top spar, two or three coming lightly to the ground, and about half a dozen undergoing the pleasant experience of a refusal, to the no small delight of the crowd. Among these last was Mr. Felix, whose sleepy-eyed animal had rushed straight at the hurdles, and wheeling round, had severely bruised his rider's foot against the spars.

'At it again, old un!' shouted a lot of little boys, with that easy scorn incident to pedestrians when a horseman gets into trouble.

Mr. Felix, clenching his teeth still harder, did go at it again, riding fairly at the hurdles; then, just as his horse was about to swerve, he wrenched at his head and simply drove the beast through the spars, while he himself was seen the next moment to be perched ungracefully on the neck of the animal, which now stood with trembling legs among the splintered wood. Maddened with rage, Felix struggled backward into the saddle, and cut into his horse fiercely with spur and whip. Fortunately, Mrs. Felix was posted near the second flight of hurdles, and there still remained a chance for her husband to distinguish himself before her eyes. How he did manage this second leap I had not an opportunity of seeing; but I was told afterwards that, to the great delight of Mrs. Felix, who nearly wept for joy, he rose well and cleared the jump gallantly at the first effort. It should be added, also, that my friend's triumph was enhanced by the fact that two or three horses, after repeated refusals, were withdrawn altogether from the contest by their disgusted riders.

The stag having taken a pretty straight course over some rather heavy country soon thinned the company of horsemen; and for a long time Mr. Felix was to be seen

painfully toiling over the stiff fields with a large number of stragglers who had not yet given up. At the end of twenty minutes there were not above sixty out of the original two hundred who could be said to be with the hounds at all; and about that time I lost sight of Mr. Felix and his persevering comrades.

By and by it became evident that the stag had turned his head eastward; and 'By Jove!' cried some one, 'he must have gone straight through Tonbridge!' The surmise turned out to be correct; the deer, for once, taking to the road, had gone straight through a dense double line of carriages and nebulous horsemen, who, having tried to overtake the hunt by this near cut, had almost filled the main thoroughfare of the town. As the riders who had really followed the hounds now came cantering up, covered with perspiration and blowing like porpoises, the good villagers cheered them on their way, and shouted with derisive laughter after those who unblushingly joined them. Among the latter was a gentleman who had been quietly drinking a glass of ale in front of the Bull; and no sooner did this person perceive me than he rode up to my side.

'You've a friend on a white horse?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'Who sat next you at breakfast?'

'Yes,' I replied, with some alarm, fearing to hear of Mr. Felix's sudden death.

'Well,' he said, with a smile, 'he was with me a few minutes ago when the stag came up the street, and, in spite of all I could do, he started off in pursuit. He wouldn't wait for the hounds; he said they would overtake him in plenty of time. Has your friend been out before?'

'Not with the staghounds,' I said.

'I thought so,' he added, with a peculiar look, 'for I never saw a man so determined to have the chasing of

the deer all to himself. He seems to consider hounds a nuisance.'

Mr. Felix, however, was soon forgotten in the universal clamour and hurry. The day was declared, with many an unnecessary ejaculation, to be the finest of the season, for the deer had never taken to the road except during his brief visit to Tonbridge, and the scent was good, and the hounds ran famously, and the field was again speedily thinned, so as to avoid the certainty of being ridden over, and everybody (who could keep up with the pace) was jubilant with a strange and tingling joy. The course was singularly straight, leading almost in a direct line over garden-land and meadow, down into moist deep glades and up the sides of trying hills, through park, and wood, and field, and fallow, until we had returned to our starting-point, passed it, and were away far to the north. At length the hounds, running by the side of a house, led us down a valley, to get into which we had to ride along a narrow by-path. As we rounded the corner we saw that the main road led up and over the tall hill on the other side of the hollow; and on this road, a considerable distance ahead of the hounds, stood a man in a scarlet coat. He set up a joyful halloo upon seeing us, and breaking through the hedge, proceeded to come down the steep incline at a pace dangerous for even an experienced rider.

'Why, that's your friend,' said the man who had formerly spoken to me; 'he is in luck's way to-day.'

The hounds had just time to pass when Felix arrived at the bottom of the hollow; and, as we came up, it was evident that this down-hill pace had been none of his making. His white horse had, on hearing the hounds, taken him away in spite of himself, and now went crash into a small hedge which the others were about to jump. The brute stuck there; but Felix, scarcely a second afterwards, found himself lying on the bank of a ditch on the

other side of the hedge, his hat smashed, his whip gone, and scarcely power left within him to open his eyes.

'Give me some sherry,' he gasped, as I got down; 'I'm afraid this is my last jump.'

His face was deadly pale, and from the utterly helpless way in which he lay extended on the carpeting of matted primroses, wild hyacinths, and dandelions, I fancied that he had really injured himself internally.

'Tell my wife she's provided for,' he moaned, after having gulped down some sherry.

'Why, get up!' I said to him; 'you're not hurt, are you?'

'You'll look after my children; I know you will,' he said faintly, shutting his eyes; 'and don't let Jack go out on the pony any more.'

'Where are you hurt?'

'All over,' he said, in a sort of ghastly whisper.

In order to inspire him with some sort of courage, I insisted that he could not be hurt, having fallen on this soft and opportune bank; and finally helped or dragged him to his feet despite his repeated moans. I persuaded him to use his limbs one by one, and made him confess that no bones were broken.

'But what are bones?' he said plaintively; 'it isn't the breakage of bones that kills men, but injury to the lungs, or heart, or liver, or something. And I feel as if I was shaken to pieces inside.'

'Mr. Felix,' said I, 'you know how much I esteem you. At the same time I can't wait any longer, and cut off my chance of ever seeing the hounds again. If you get on your horse—he waits for you quietly enough—you will find yourself all right, and you may yet distinguish yourself.'

'No,' he said, shaking his head sadly; 'I have had enough for to-day. I shall have to ride home now; but if

I find myself growing weak, I shall call at Graham's and stay there for the night.'

He mounted his horse in a melancholy manner, and very slowly and very carefully walked the animal up the hill down which he had come so rapidly. As he disappeared round the corner of the road, he waved his fingers with a frail hilarity, and I saw him no more.

But as it is the fortune of Mr. Felix with which we are chiefly concerned, it may be better to follow him and look at the stag-hunt from his point of view. The house in which he proposed, in case of feeling very ill, to pass the night, was about a dozen miles from the scene of his mishap; and by the time he had reached it the long solitary ride had greatly depressed his spirits. He resolved, at least, to enter and rest himself, leaving the question of his night's lodging for further consideration. Fortunately Mr. Graham was at home; and in his friend's dining-room Mr. Felix, with the help of a little wine, began to feel himself again. Dusk was coming on; and our hero beguiled the lassitude of the afternoon by a history of his morning's adventure.

Suddenly a terrific crash was heard outside; a succession of shrill screams followed; and the next moment there was a pattering of hoofs across the lawn, and the noise of a falling tray in Mr. Graham's hall. The whole party started up and rushed to the window, where they beheld an awful scene of devastation. The glass framework of a fine conservatory was smashed to pieces, and lay in splinters and fragments upon the path, while trailing stems of vines, potted geraniums and azaleas, and innumerable greenhouse plants lay heaped together amid shreds of earthenware. Mrs. Graham was the first to dart to the door; and she had scarcely done so when, with a loud shriek, she tumbled back into the room.

'O George!' she cried, 'there's—there's some *creature* in the hall!'

George, rushing to the door, and expecting to meet a vision of some horrible being with eyes of fire and cloven hoofs, found himself confronted by the very stag which Mr. Felix had vainly attempted to follow; while at the same moment there came the cry of the hounds, which were now coursing along the garden-path. Mr. Graham's hall would soon have become a slaughter-house, had not the gardener, alarmed by the crash of the conservatory, come running forward from the outside, and at once comprehending the situation, darted to the hall-door, and shut in the deer. But what to do with the frightened animal which was so encaged? Had it been a famished tiger at bay, the people in the house could not have been more alarmed; and for a time Mr. Felix and his friends contented themselves by peeping round the corner of the drawing-room door at the unfortunate beast, which stood panting and trembling by the side of the umbrella-stand. In time, however, the gardener came to the rescue, and, with the assistance of a groom, threw a rope over the stag's head, and secured him.

Such was the position of affairs when I again came in view of Mr. Felix, who now passed outside to meet the members of the hunt. He had taken care to put on his hat; and doubtless most of us fancied him a terrible fellow to have beaten the very hounds in the run.

'All right, gentlemen,' he said blandly, 'he's safe and sound, and ready for another day as soon as you want him.'

But Mr. Graham, coming forward, and discovering who was the master of the hounds, began to make a grievous complaint about the demolition of his conservatory. He became quite angry. He vowed that no money could recompense him for the loss of rare plants he had sustained; and that, for the mere breakage of glass and so forth, five guineas were the least he would take.

'And unless I get the five guineas,' said he, 'you don't get your stag; that's all.'

Now the master did not happen to have any money at all with him; and it was with the greatest difficulty that he was enabled to gather by subscription the sum of 4*l.* 10*s.*

'I don't believe the whole place is worth five pounds,' said the master, with a great oath; 'but here, sir, as you bring your shop with you from London down into the country, I'll give you 4*l.* 10*s.* for the article, and if you're not satisfied—'

'Then I shall be responsible for the rest,' observed Mr. Felix, with a grand air.

As we rode off to the nearest inn to order some dinner, Mr. Felix came to me, and said coaxingly—

'You'll come home with me and stay over the night at our place? And, you know, you needn't say anything to Mrs. Felix about my being in the house when the deer was taken. Let her suppose I rode all the way with the hounds—she will like it, I know. Women do feel gratified by such trifles; and what's the harm of a little bit of innocent deception?'

III.

MR. FELIX GOES TROUT-FISHING.



'Zu neuen Ufern lockt ein neuer Tag.' Mr. Felix began to grow weary of his horses, and hungered for a new

amusement. He rebelled, sometimes with savage emphasis, against that process of idealisation by which Mrs. Felix would transform him into a royal hunter of the stag; and hinted, in no gentle manner, that she had better burn her English history, and not make a fool of herself. She saw this vacillation with profound grief. Her highest hopes had been realised by the brilliant exploit of her husband in being in at the taking of the deer; although it seemed to her very shameful that she should not have been allowed to hang up a pair of antlers in the hall.

'There's no more deer to run after,' he said, with ungrammatical force; 'and what's the use of nagging? I tell you my name is Samuel Felix, and not William Rufus; and what's more, I'm going to try trout-fishing, as a far more sensible thing than galloping over muddy fields after a lot of nasty dogs.'

Accordingly, Mr. Felix came up to town, and there launched into boundless extravagance in the purchase of such a collection of rods, lines, reels, flies, and treatises on the art of fishing, as surely never before threatened the instant clearance of all English rivers. Nothing which human ingenuity, or the fishing-tackle maker's art, could devise was wanting in my friend's superb list of preparations; and, burdened by this armful of miscellaneous implements, he made his way back again into Kent.

For a week I heard nothing of him. At the end of that time I found him, one warm afternoon, busily engaged in throwing a fly-line across the lawn in front of the Beeches.

'Everybody thinks he can throw a fly until he tries,' said he. 'Now, do you see that bit of paper lying there?'

He swept the rod forward from his left shoulder, and the point of the line dropped within two inches of the mark. I was surprised at his proficiency.

'It has taken me a week's constant practice to do that,'

said he proudly; 'and to-morrow, as you know, I'm going to put my skill to the test.'

'But what have you got at the end of the line?' I asked, noticing one or two small black specks.

'Oh,' he said, 'these are two or three split shot, just to steady the line as it falls, you know. I wasn't told to do so by any book; but you've no idea how it guides the line against the wind and weather, and enables you to drop the fly precisely where you want.'

'It is a beautiful arrangement,' I said to him, 'for fishing on the lawn; and doubtless to-morrow the trout will be grateful to you for giving them such plain notice of the arrival of an artificial fly.'

'You'll see,' he replied confidently, 'how gently I shall drop lead and hook and all over their noses.'

In-doors, Mrs. Felix was in a mood of mingled melancholy and sulks. As we entered, she asked her husband, with some asperity, when he was going to take his trash off the table, to allow tea to be brought in. The 'trash' turned out to be Mr. Felix's splendid collection of flies, which, for purposes of comparison, he had taken out of his book, and arranged side by side on large sheets of white paper.

'There!' said he; 'there is only one maker in Great Britain who can produce a Durham Ranger like that. What do you think of my Spey Dog?—do you think there's a salmon in the world could resist that teal hackle at the shoulder, and that glittering line of tinsel? Now I'll wager you haven't in your book an O'Donoghue to be compared with this one—let us see.'

I informed Mr. Felix that, in preparing to fish in Kent, I did not provide myself with flies for all the rivers in Europe; a piece of intelligence which seemed rather to annoy him.

'How can you call yourself a fisher unless you are ready to fish any water?' said he: 'if I go to the Spey, or

the Usk, or the Dee, or the Erne, I am prepared at all points. Besides, I consider that, as mere triumphs of art, these flies are worth having. Look at them!—look at the Green Drake!—was there ever anything so like nature? Look at this Parson, and this March brown, and this Soldier Palmer!'

Mr. Felix lifted a solitary fly. and held it out with a slight bashfulness appearing on his face.

'This is a fly,' he said, 'which I think ought to kill. I propose to call it Count Bismarck. Black silk body, you see, claret hackle, and silver thread: don't you think it is adapted for those lurid afternoons when everything gets a sultry coppery tinge? Perhaps gold thread would be better; but the first time I go trout-fishing on a lake, I mean to try my Bismarck, and I have every hope of its success.'

'It's more than I have of yours, Mr. Felix,' said my friend's wife scornfully; 'there, you've had the whole house packed with your rods and flies for a week, and you haven't brought home a minnow. Why, the children can do better. Jack brought us a fine trout last night which he caught with a bit of stick, and string, and a worm.'

'If I find any of the children fishing down in that stream, Mrs. Felix,' said her husband firmly, 'I will give them as good a ducking as ever they got in their life.'

Mrs. Felix smiled disdainfully. She was not terrified by her husband's flourish of rhetoric.

I think it was this taunt which made Mr. Felix order, in rather a peremptory way, that tea should be postponed for an hour, to admit of his trying an experiment on the trout inhabiting a mill-head some five minutes' walk from the Beeches. My friend, therefore, disappeared, and in a few moments returned in a full suit of fishing costume. He was resplendent. He seemed to bristle all over with hooks and other implements of piscatorial warfare. His white waterproof fishing-stockings were secured at the

bottom by a pair of thick scarlet socks, which again rose from a pair of large and complicated boots. Spare lengths of gut curled round his beaver hat in innumerable rings. In one hand he held a handsome rod, in the other a shiny landing-net: from top to toe he was fearfully and wonderfully made.

To give him a fair chance, I resolved to leave him all the water to himself; and thereupon we departed for the mill-head. It was a beautiful evening in the beginning of June; the air was moist and warm, some rain having fallen half an hour before we set out; and a slight wind just ruffled the surface of the great pond which Mr. Felix proposed to fish. Nervously, perhaps, but still with some confidence, he approached the margin of the water at the point furthest from the mill, where there was a gentle current coming from underneath a small bridge.

At the opposite side, a few inches from a low grassy bank, and under the shadow of some bushes, lay a good-sized trout, sleepily motionless, not deigning even to look at the flies dancing above him. Mr. Felix grasped my arm convulsively.

'Don't stir! Can you catch a glimpse of him over yonder?—you'll see how I shall drop a fly over him!'

With one or two preparatory casts to get the line out, Mr. Felix at length succeeded in fulfilling his promise. As was to be expected, the 'flop' of his cut shot on the water startled the trout, which with a quick shoot vanished from sight, leaving only a long wave in its wake. It was some time before Mr. Felix could realise the fact of his having been so bitterly disappointed. When he did, he made a few uncalled-for remarks relating to nothing in particular.

'I suppose I must take the shot off, after all,' said he disconsolately; 'but I don't think there will be much difficulty in throwing a fly on a night like this.'

With a clear line, he now proceeded to try a few casts.

The first throw brought all the line curling down upon the water, some half-dozen yards in front of him. Amazement seized him; and then I saw him clench his teeth. Up went the rod; back went the long fine streak, and then, with a splendid swoop, he threw his right hand forward. There was a sharp crack above his head, as if Felix was urging on a team of coach-horses; and the next moment the lithe gut, in a rather uncertain manner, alit upon the surface not an inch further out.

'You needn't throw again, in the mean time,' I remarked to him.

'Why?' he asked fiercely; for a fine trout had risen opposite us in the middle of the water.

'Because the crack nipped the fly off.'

I thought tears of vexation would have come into the eyes of the gentle angler, so downcast did he look, so thunderstruck, so annoyed. Mechanically he took out his splendid assortment of impossible insects, and selected a fly which would certainly have produced instant vertigo in any trout coming near it.

'The evening is rather dull,' said he, 'and they want colour to attract them. But what's the use of my throwing and throwing, if this wretched gut won't go out? I tell you there's something wrong. I've seen people fishing in this very mill-head who did not take half the care I do, and their line, because it was a good line, fell most beautifully and lightly, the fly dropping on the water like the wing of a gnat, and not the least ripple to be seen. I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll write to the papers and say that —— and Sons are no better than a lot of impostors, and that their rods and lines are not fit to put before swine.'

So saying, Mr. Felix proceeded once more to lash the water, the line almost invariably curling itself into rings as it fell about a rod's length from the bank. In every position he stood; every sweep of the arm he tried; but

his attempts were unavailing; while, to add to the misery of the situation, the trout were rising everywhere around him.

'The wind is somehow in the way,' said he, at length, with a great effort to conceal his anger; 'let us try down by the mill there.'

Passing over a sluice-gate, we found ourselves in front of a new sphere of action; and Mr. Felix was about to recommence his painful labours, when an unlucky accident befell him. Concealed beneath a group of willows hard by, a swan, as we afterwards learned, was hatching; and no sooner had we appeared in the neighbourhood, than the male swan—a remarkably large handsome bird—took our approach to mean an attack upon his prospective progeny. Dashing through the water towards Mr. Felix, who was nearest him, he struggled up and on the bank, and made a furious charge upon my friend, who, fortunately for himself, involuntarily retreated. In the first paroxysm of his terror, however, he had not noticed that immediately behind him was a deep ditch, filled with green stagnant water, the leakings from the mill-head. At the first blow aimed at his leg by the wing of the swan, Mr. Felix jumped back, and, therefore, disappeared suddenly from the light of day, leaving the swan master of the situation. As the unhappy sportsman crept up the opposite bank of the ditch, a mass of mud and tangled weeds, his plight was surely sad enough; but to add to his horror, he found that the mishap had included the breaking of his best trout-rod.

'Can you see a boy about?' he asked of me, with a strange look, when he had wiped his lips. 'I'll give him a sovereign to run up to my house.'

'What for?'

'For my revolver.'

'Do you mean to shoot that swan?'

'I do.'

'You'll miss it, and kill somebody about the mill, if you try.'

Eventually Mr. Felix was persuaded to remove as much of the mud from his clothes as was possible, and to wend his disconsolate way homeward. I do not mean to lift the veil of domestic privacy, and say anything of the sarcasms which my poor hero bore, during the evening, with more than his accustomed equanimity.

At an early hour next morning, the wagonette was at the door, and Mr. Felix, once again radiant with hope, ready to jump in. An enormous hamper was safely stowed away; and when the remaining room was pretty well occupied by spare rods, landing-nets, and what not, there arrived, to complete the party, a Mr. Mearns, an aged Waltonian of short stature, silvery hair, and thin, nervous, brown fingers, which had many a time lured a four-pounder to his doom.

'Hasn't Lord Switchem some rayther gude fishing about here?' he asked, knowing nothing of the little incident which had broken the intimacy between his lordship and Mr. Felix.

'Nothing to speak of,' said Felix contemptuously; 'besides, he's a coarse ungentlemanly man, fit only for hanging about stables, and talking about dogs and horses. When I made it all right with Sir Harry about our going to-day, nothing could exceed his courtesy: and Sir Harry has something like fishing, as you'll see.'

A drive of half an hour or so brought us to the outskirts of Sir Harry's grounds; and the wagonette having been left at the nearest inn, we soon found our way to the river. The water was in prime condition, as it came circling and flowing down through the low rich meadows, which were yellow with buttercups; and already in the deep pools, whither the rush of the stream sent multitudinous drowned flies, there could be seen the quick 'flop' of the rising trout, followed by slowly winding circles on

the dull surface. Our fishing-ground extended from these meadows, where the course of the stream was marked by a few polled willows, or a line of low alders, to the lawn in front of Sir Harry's house, which was perhaps two miles off. Here, therefore, was plenty of scope for Mr. Felix's trial of skill. The morning, besides, was cloudy, with here and there a shaft of sunlight breaking through: the air was warm, the stream was not very clear, there was no wind but such as simply to take the mirror off the surface of the water; and what more could the piscatorial student want?

I observed, however, that Mr. Felix, while preparing for his first effort, kept away from his Scotch friend, and threw his fly in a furtive manner upon a pool where no one could see how it dropped.

'Maister Felix,' cried the latter, 'what sort o' flee will ye pit on?'

'I'm trying the Red Palmer,' he replied, with a critical glance up and down the river.

'Losh me!' said Mr. Mearns, 'the Red Pawmer on a morning like this? Dinna ye see the May-flee comin' down by the dizzen?'

The words were scarcely uttered when the old man, with a quick motion of the wrist, struck sharply and firmly, and a fine trout leapt clean out of the water. A little run up stream, with the line gripping him stiffly, soon exhausted his obstinacy, and presently he was being quietly drawn towards the bank. Mr. Felix's man came running forward with the landing-net.

'Now, my man, be carefu'. Dinna ye break my line, or I'll pit ye in the water after the fish.'

But no such accident occurred; and Mr. Felix, not very joyfully, perhaps, came up to look at the first capture, which was a good trout of about two pounds weight.

'You took that with the May-fly, did you?' said he, returning to his own pool, and taking out his pocket-book.

But alas for the vanity of human hopes! The May-flies were coming down in 'dizzens'—hovering upon the water in the most tempting manner; but the great, sleepy, gray monsters underneath would not look at them. When they absolutely allowed the natural flies to glide over their nose, how was it possible to force upon them an artificial one? So the old Scotchman set to work to try a series of experiments, and the longer he tried the more astonished did he become. They would not look at his flies, let alone rise to them; and in vain we both whipped and lashed away at the water. All the time, likewise, that these rather mournful efforts were being made, we could hear the muttered anathemas of Mr. Felix, as he curled his line down upon the water, or hooked a weed, or hung up his fly upon a willow. At times we could see him on his knees, stretching his hand over the water to extricate the hook; at another he was half-way up a tree, breaking branches and tugging at the elusive gut. Perspiration was streaming over his face; but as yet the fish-bag held only one captive.

And now the sun came out in its full strength, until the long green meadows and the great chestnuts in Sir Harry's park seemed to quiver in the lambent heat. We were forced to leave this part of the stream and seek another portion, where the overhanging trees on the southern side sheltered the water from the fierce glare. Here, however, we had no better luck. The trout were plentiful, and rose tolerably well; but no fly which we could throw them would they look at. Deep despair was beginning to fall upon the party, when it was proposed to relieve the wretched tedium of the day by taking luncheon. With a sense of glad relief which he could not conceal, Mr. Felix laid aside his rod, and proceeded to open the great hamper which his man, assisted by a boy, had brought up into the meadow. The champagne was put into a creek of the river, the white cloth was laid on the

warm dry grass, knives, forks, plates, and what not were forthcoming, and soon the air was redolent of mint sauce, and lamb, and tongue, and crisp cool lettuce. Mr. Felix's spirits revived. He talked of the delights of angling; he jocularly pointed out to Mr. Mearns that he was only one ahead; he vowed that, fortified by this luncheon, we should return and do wonders.

The old Scotchman, on the other hand, was restrained and silent. A whole collection of artificial flies was evidently whirling about in his brain. Mentally he was arguing strenuously with these incomprehensible and abominable trout.

At this moment Sir Harry's keeper came up, and was persuaded, without much persuasion, to take a plateful of cold lamb and salad. He likewise had some other less material dainties, all of which he consumed some little distance apart, occasionally returning to us to speak of the water and of the fish. Finally, he had some champagne out of a silver mug, and this proved to be the key to unlock the secret chambers of his heart. Cold lamb and pastry he had withstood; but champagne in a silver mug overcame him. He came over for the last time, and told us that Sir Harry had recently tried almost every fly—even the May-fly—without getting a rise; but so soon as he showed the alder-fly the trout rose, and were slaughtered in hosts.

Mearns jumped to his feet, and was quickly out of sight.

'I think I have got some alder-flies,' said Mr. Felix; 'but I don't know which they are. I shall label my book as soon as I get home.'

Alder-flies were soon upon every rod; and before half an hour was over eight good fish had been landed. The ease with which the trout took the bait maddened Mr. Felix, who had not yet caught one, his chief performances having been those excursions up trees which I previously mentioned. The stream was in most parts so narrow that

there was no difficulty about his dropping the fly on the proper place; but unfortunately he invariably dropped on the same place two or three yards of curling line, which either made the trout shoot out of sight, or caused him to lie still with contemptuous indifference.

'It's a gran' water to fish,' said the old Scotchman; 'I never saw the like o't. But what's wrang wi' ye, Maister Felix? Ye seem unco doon-speerited.'

'It's all this confounded rod!' said Felix, grinding his teeth; 'a man might have the strength of Samson and not be able to throw a yard of line with it. All it can do is to pin the fly upon alder branches.'

'Dear me!' said Mearns compassionately; 'and ye hae na brocht a single trout to land. Here, tak' my rod, and I'll play the pairt o' Samson for a while.'

So the old man took Mr. Felix's rod, and deftly, with those long thin fingers of his, dropped the fly over the head of one of the trout that lay beneath the opposite bank. There was a slight movement in the water, the fly was sucked in, and then the line grew suddenly tight as the gleaming side of the fish cut through the quiet stream.

'It's a wee bit thing, but better than nane,' was the remark, as another pound and a half was added to the general stock.

Suddenly Mr. Felix uttered a loud cry; and turning, we saw him, with an ashen pallor of face, tugging at the line, and attempting to lift out of the water a fish which had at length been enticed into taking his fly.

'Losh bless me, man!' cried the old Scotchman, 'ye'll break my rod to bits! Dinna pu' like that!'

'What am I to do, then?' cried Felix, in the greatest possible excitement; 'he's a monster! He'll get off! He's a dozen pound weight! I believe he's a salmon!'

The next unconscious prompting of his intense desire to secure this leviathan was to let the reel run, lest the line should be broken and he escape. The consequence

may be imagined. The efforts of the fish ceased, and Mr. Felix found it impossible by any amount of pulling to dislodge him from his retreat in the bed of the river. Slowly my friend proceeded up the bank of the stream, winding in the line as he went, until it was clearly demonstrated that Mr. Felix's captive had taken refuge in a bed of green weed half-way across. What was to be done? The fish would not stir. Stones could never reach him. Then Mr. Felix, moved by the sarcasms of his wife, wore no longer his waterproofs of the day before; he had been taunted into dressing himself like a human being.

'I'm not going to lose such a fish for a pair of wet feet,' said he valiantly, as he jumped into the river.

There, however, progress was no easy matter; for the current was strong, the water considerably more than knee-deep, and the bed of the stream matted with these tangled weeds. Carefully Mr. Felix took the line in his hand, and began to trace the fish to his lair. He kicked away the weeds as he went farther out; and yet there were no signs of the dislodgment of the line. Kicking and tugging in equal proportions, he had at length reached the middle of the stream, when he uttered a slight cry: there was a flash of something cutting through the water; either excitement or a desire to seize the fish caused him to stumble forward, and then our hero went down, face first, into the stream, while the broken line floated lightly back to the rod, which Mr. Mearns held in his hand. Snorting like a young whale, Mr. Felix struggled to his feet again. He glared wildly around: had he caught his man laughing, instant dismissal would have rewarded his presumption.

'As it is,' said he boldly, as he came dripping to the side, 'I hooked the biggest fish of the day.'

'The day's no' ower yet,' said Mr. Mearns quietly, watching with his keen eye for the first rise: then, as he saw Mr. Felix was about to depart, he added, 'Ye're no'

ganging back? Hoots, man! in the sun out there ye'll be as dry as a red herrin' in twenty minutes!'

'I have no ambition to be as dry as a red herring,' replied Mr. Felix, with a sneer; 'and I'm not going to catch a cold for the biggest basket of trout that ever was filled. But I shall take my rod and landing-net with me; and perhaps when you find me at the inn on your return I may have one or two fish to add to your store.'

So saying he departed—a mournful spectacle. He had not, however, passed out of sight when I saw him crouching down by the side of the river, apparently going through a singular performance with his landing-net. When I again looked he was gone; and the circumstance had passed from my mind when we found him, in the evening, seated in the parlour of the inn, comfortably smoking and reading the newspapers.

'Did you catch anything as you returned?' I asked.

'Look in the landing-net,' said he proudly; 'it's in the corner.'

And there, sure enough, was a fine trout, carefully wrapped up in sedge-leaves. Mr. Mearns closely scanned it.

'What flee did ye catch it wi'?' he asked.

'The alder-fly, of course,' replied Felix.

'That's maist extraordinar',' said the old Scotchman.

'Why?' demanded Felix, not without a certain fierceness in his tone.

'*Because the trout's blin'!*'

'And can't a blind trout swallow a fly?' asked Mr. Felix, grown suddenly angry, 'or how in all the earth could it remain alive?'

'I dinna ken,' replied the Scotchman, 'as I never tried to make a blin' fish see a flee.'

But, as Mr. Felix pointed out to me, there was no necessity for telling Mrs. Felix that the trout was blind, women having many peculiar and unreasonable prejudices.

IV.

MR. FELIX ON THE MOORS.

THE elaborate fly-rod which Mr. Felix had bought, and all its ingenious and complicated accessories, were deposited in the library, and were not used any more. Mr. Rolfe was not commissioned to paint the blind trout which had mysteriously swallowed my friend's fly; nor yet was the fish sent off to be stuffed and framed. He rescinded the order, already despatched to his bookseller, for the *Complete Angler*, in scarlet morocco. He affected to sneer at fishing as a recreation fit only for school-girls, and was particular to direct Mrs. Felix never again to offer him trout for breakfast.

There was great excitement at the Beeches when it became known that Mr. Felix, seduced by a very tempting advertisement in the *Field*, was about to rent a moor in Scotland and go off on a hunting and shooting excursion, the vague and mystic sublimity of which seemed to make a great impression on the mind of Mrs. Felix. Her imagination, swifter far than the express which puts you down in Aberdeen before the husky smell of London has gone from the nostrils, whirled her into a land of mist and rain, of feudal castles and enchanted lakes, of maidens' bowers and robber chieftains; and both Mr. Felix and myself were struck by the eager and happy way she at once proposed to startle some of her Cockney friends by inviting them northward to a grand dinner, at which the candles should be held in the hands of a score of stalwart gillies placed behind the guests' chairs. When Mr. Felix, with a bashful timidity which need not, I am sure, have made him look so frightened, hinted that his family were not to partake of the pleasures of the field, his wife was simply

speechless with amazement. Mr. Felix, however, gathering courage, proceeded to show that ladies and children would find no pleasure in chasing the wild deer and following the roe; that they would be inappropriate, not to say embarrassing, in the midst of these pathless solitudes inhabited only by grouse and inarticulate savages; and that the correct thing for a mother to do, in such a case, was to take her young ones down to Ramsgate and practise economy for the good of her health. This, in the end, she agreed to; furnishing her husband with a list of the people to whom she wished some game sent.

But, previous to our setting out, Mr. Felix had provided himself, following his ordinary reckless disregard for cost, with a vast quantity of shooting material. He bought a double-barrelled breech-loader, two double-barrelled muzzle-loaders, an air-gun, a pair of fancy pistols in case, a big revolver, and as much powder, shot, and cartridges as might have filled an ammunition-wagon. He had sent to his house one evening (when there was neither proper shelter nor food provided for them) three brace of pointers, a retriever, and a Highland pony, for the last of which he had given eighteen pounds. When his groom informed him that in the Highlands, whither he was going, as useful a pony could be got for about six pounds, he pretended he had bought the animal as a curiosity for the children, and directed that Master Harry should take possession of the new purchase next morning.

The necessary preparations for our long journey prevented Mr. Felix testing any one of the guns he had bought; and I had, therefore, no opportunity of judging how my partner was likely to work on the moor. He certainly exhibited a goodly amount of learning in talking of the breed of the retriever; and his technical knowledge of the parts of his gun seemed to be as spick and span new as the guns themselves. But there was a painful reticence about Mr. Felix whenever he was asked about his previous sporting

experiences; and he invariably, with much ingenuity, changed the subject. Once in the train, however, and with nothing to think about but anticipations of good weather, plenty of sport, and decent health, I boldly challenged him.

'I suppose you've got quite converted to the breech-loader?' I asked.

'Well, yes,' said Mr. Felix uneasily; 'on the whole I prefer the breech-loader.'

'Done much execution with it?'

'No, not exactly. The fact is, I never used a breech-loader; but I believe most people like it.'

'You've been a late convert, then. What have you been in the habit of shooting?'

'Well, to tell you the truth, I'm not much of a shot. I never was in the habit of shooting anything. I remember having tried when a boy to shoot sparrows with a—with a pistol, in fact.'

There was a great flush on Mr. Felix's face, which the twilight inside the carriage only partially concealed. Thereafter he seemed greatly preoccupied. On through the gathering darkness rattled the train; Mr. Felix did not utter a word. Suddenly he broke forth.

'It can't be difficult to shoot such a big bird as the grouse, when your No. 6 shot spread well and you get tolerably near.'

'You never shot a bird flying?'

'I don't know that I ever did,' he replied humbly; 'but then, you see, my eyes are good, and why should I not be able to aim as straight as anybody else? It isn't like some profound science you've to puzzle over for years. There's the bird, high up in the air, distinctly visible; there's you with a good gun in your hand, and a tolerable pair of eyes in your head: what should hinder you from bringing him down? I know some people are very expert in shooting, and are able to kill more than their neigh-

bours; but, after all, I never pretended to have all the qualifications of a gamekeeper, and I don't measure the sport I get by the slaughter I can accomplish.'

Mr. Felix's theory was so beautiful that I considered it would have been cruelty to question it.

The hamlet of Ballinclough lies a few miles south of Huntly, in the district of Strathbogie; a wretched little clachan, which nevertheless looked picturesque and pleasing in the ruddy evening light as we came in sight of its red chimneys and crumbled gables. It was on the outskirts of this village we found the person who had sub-let to us the moor; and, under his guidance, we continued our journey until we reached the rather dismal-looking lodge, for which, with the moor, Mr. Felix had engaged to give one hundred pounds for a month, exclusive of salaries. Fortunately we had been warned to bring provisions with us from Huntly, which were at once delivered over to the cook. After dinner, Mr. Colquhoun having accepted an invitation to feed with us, Mr. Felix was introduced to his keeper, a man of extraordinary height and bearing, who wore a big brown moustache and beard. Unlike the other men, who spoke broken English with a Gaelic accent, he conversed sententiously in broad Scotch, and puzzled poor Mr. Felix dreadfully. Indeed the picture my friend presented when standing opposite this giant, and trying wistfully to catch his meaning by looking up at the expression of his face, was rather comic in its way; and Mr. Jamieson, soon perceiving that the gentle Felix had never seen or even smelt heather before, began to address him in a somewhat dictatorial manner.

'The birds are geyan wild, sir,' said he, 'but we'll no' begin drivin' just yet till we see hoo ye get on. It's a gran' moor, though.'

'Indeed,' said Felix.

'I'm thinkin' ye wouldna believe me if I telled ye the bags that hev been made here.'

'Ah, I daresay not,' said my friend, with unconscious sarcasm.

'If you and the other gentleman'll start early the morn's mornin', ye'll mak' a good day's work, I'se warrant.'

If Mr. Felix did not go to bed, and weep for downright sorrow to think that the night must pass before the morrow, it was because a strong tumbler of whisky-punch, added to the fatigues of the day, sent him a sound night's rest. At daybreak, nevertheless, he was up and dressed, and kept continually going to the window of our breakfast-room to discover what sort of weather we were likely to have. As yet the morning was cold and damp, but no rain had fallen. A pony was soon in readiness to take our guns, ammunition, &c. to the moor, which was in such proximity to the lodge as to admit of our walking to the spot. Mr. Felix was not in very high spirits, as I had expected, though he exhibited sufficient nervous unrest, and seemed very much annoyed to think that he would be followed all day by one or other of the three gillies who now accompanied us.

'Of all the disgusting things in life,' said he emphatically, 'waiters are the worst. I hate 'em, whether they're in your own house and keep fidgeting behind your chair and listening to everything that's said, or whether they come out with you like them fellows there and grin at each other if you don't prove to them that your father was a poacher. I suppose, if we drive the grouse, these men'll do it?'

'Certainly.'

'Well, I insist on driving at once. I can't bear to be dodged at the heels all day, and feel that every mischance you have will be laughed at by these critical beggars, who had likely never a gun in their hands. I don't see the pleasure of a day's amusement, if you're tracked and watched like that.'

Mr. Felix spoke with emotion; but by and by he was persuaded to suffer this inconvenience for a season until we saw how wild the grouse were.

Arrived at the moor, which stretches up into the craggy heights of Cairnantoul, a brace of Mr. Felix's pointers were set to work, and my friend moved quietly forward, followed by his attendant sprite, who, along with the game-bag, carried a waterproof coat. Mr. Felix, I should have said, was resplendent in a light suit of tweeds; and, with his shot-bag over his shoulder, his cap-holder dangling from his button-hole in company with a dog-whistle, and with his glancing double-barrelled muzzle-loader pointed peacefully to the sky, he looked commanding and picturesque. So it was that he made his first appearance on the moors; and I am confident that if grouse-shooting had consisted in his walking up and down in this striking costume, he would have been content and happy, nor would have longed for the vulgar excitement of killing a large number of timorous birds.

Forward went the two pointers, apparently working well enough. Mr. Felix was now in front of everybody, and as he began to feel the tufts of springy heather beneath the feet, and as imagination filled every trifling hollow with close packs, he seemed to become rather constrained and nervous. Suddenly he left off following his dogs, and came over to me, with his face full of a conscious embarrassment.

'I say,' he asked, in a low whisper, 'do you put a wad between the powder and shot?'

'Of course.'

'Well, but I haven't. I—I forgot—I mean I made a blunder. What's to be done?'

'Screw out the charge.'

'But I didn't bring a screw with me,' said Felix, in despair, with a side glance at the pointers.

Shortly after I had shown him that he was the un-

witting possessor of a screw, and sent him back to his gillie and his dogs, I heard a very peculiar noise. I turned in time to see one of the pointers, which had hit upon a scent when he was perhaps sixty yards from Felix, rush off upon the trail with all the joyful cry and impetuosity of a harrier. Of course he came upon the pack; and five birds rose. They were at least eighty yards from Mr. Felix, who had just managed to load; but nevertheless I saw him put his gun up to his shoulder in a slow and bungling way. At the distance I was from him, I could see the barrels shake; while, as he fired both charges, he stumbled backward with the recoil, and had nearly fallen on the heather. He turned quickly to see if any one was watching him.

'You will never get any birds wis tat tawg,' said the gillie; 'he will pe sa goot tawg for some things, but he will not to here.'

'My dogs have been properly trained,' said Mr. Felix, not without dignity, for he was nettled.

'Sey will pe trained not for grouse-shooting,' said the gillie resolutely.

Fortunately the keeper got up in time to settle the dispute by recalling the ebullient pointer and putting another in his place.

'The grouse *are* rather wild,' said Mr. Felix mildly.

'Yes, sir, they are; but there's nae use shootin' at them when they're oot o' sicht.'

'When they're what?'

'Oot o' sicht. By the time ye fired there wasna a bird to be seen; they were a' ayont the hillock out there, wi' that deevil o' a dowg after them.'

Mr. Felix said no more, but directed the gillie to get in the dogs, and, with an unholy light rising in his eyes, came over to me.

'I suppose we're not bound to pay these fellows, if they turn out to be nothing else than uncivil beasts, are we? I

thought there was to be some sort of pleasure in a party like this: I don't see it. People come here for amusement —and precious expensive amusement it is—and not to be insulted by a lot of rascally poachers.'

'Why, what's the matter?' I asked.

'I shall stay with you for a while,' he said, 'and see how you get on. I don't care about shooting just yet. I want to see whether the dogs work decently.'

Mr. Felix, however, in rather an excited manner, loaded his gun and put it over his shoulder. The dogs worked decently enough, and in a minute or two one of them was struck motionless.

'Now,' I said to Felix, 'come along cautiously, and be sure you fire at the right-hand bird.'

We got about fifteen yards from the grouse before they rose, and I saw Felix's face pale with the start which the sudden whirr of their wings gave him. Up went his gun; he clenched his teeth; the next moment there was a terrific report, followed by the heavy fall of my friend on the heather. There he lay, with white face and closed eyes, while the gillies came rushing up. I tried to rouse him; he only groaned.

'What's the matter, Felix? are you hurt?'

'Bring the pony, and take me home,' he whispered; 'I have broken my shoulder-blade.'

A little sherry poured down his throat seemed to revive him; and by and by he recovered sufficiently to be placed upon his legs. One of the men, in the mean time, had lifted Mr. Felix's gun, and tried both barrels with the ramrod.

'The shentleman will have put sa two charges in sa one barrel,' said hegravely.

'Hold your tongue, you impudent thief!' cried Felix, with an electric spasm of rage; 'if you'd bring over that pony, instead of standing there like a diseased hyena, you'd have a better chance of getting your wages at the end of the month.'

All persuasion was useless. It was of no avail to point out to Mr. Felix that his shoulder would recover from the temporary blow it had received; he insisted on his at once proceeding homeward and getting to bed. The last I saw of him was the pony and its disconsolate rider disappearing over the moor, Mr. Felix looking no more the bright and gallant creature he had appeared as he set out in the morning.

But when I returned to the lodge at night, expecting to find our little household hushed and quiet in deference to the whim of the hurt man, I was amazed to hear a succession of strange sounds issuing from the window of our largest room—ringing shouts of laughter, hurried stampings of feet on the wooden floor, and low shrill whoops were blended in wild confusion, which seemed all the madder when contrasted with the stillness outside. Approaching the window, I beheld a scene which can only be paralleled by that which Tam o' Shanter saw in Alloway Kirk.

The shutters were not closed, and the candles inside were burning brightly, so that Jamieson and myself could see without being seen. The central table of the room had been carried into the passage; another smaller table stood at the top of the apartment, covered with tumblers, which sent forth reeking fumes of whisky-punch; seven or eight men—apparently cottars from the neighbourhood—and three farm-lasses were dancing a wild promiscuous reel, and keeping time by howling rather than singing 'Miss Lawson's Strathspey' at the pitch of their voices, while ever and anon this unearthly music was enlivened by the ear-piercing whoops of the dancers. No thing but the insanity of whisky-toddy could have produced such an amazing saturnalia, which was not the less surprising that it took place in a private house for which I was supposed to be paying rent.

'What's this?' I said, turning to Jamieson.

The tall Scotchman could only look on with open mouth and eyes.

'I never saw such a deevil's dance afore,' said he; 'and to think they should be disturbin' Mr. Felix in that mainner. Losh me! is that no your friend in the big chair?'

My attention having been fixed upon the dancers had prevented my observing, by the side of the table, a large arm-chair, which occupied the place of honour at the head of the room. On this capacious throne sat the gentle Felix; and, as I caught glimpses of him through the figures of the reel, it was apparent that he was beating time on the table with a poker, while he regarded the people before him with a maundering smile. I thought it was time to enter.

Scarcely had we got inside the door, when the cook came running forward with a dreadful story. Mr. Felix, on reaching home, had ordered some whisky and water—an order which was repeated several times, until there was heard to issue from his room, shortly after dinner, an unearthly sound, as of some one singing, in a thin and querulous voice, a pathetic ballad. Thereafter Mr. Felix had more whisky and water; and finally went out and sent for all the people round about to come and keep him company. The two jars of whisky which we had sent on from Huntly were placed in this big room; hot water, sugar, and tumblers were demanded; and then began the orgie which had gradually increased in fury during the evening.

With difficulty I pushed my way through the dancers towards my friend.

'Aha!' he said, with an idiotic simper, 'shot many grouse, old boy? I think you had three brace when I left; but you know they were all flukes; you know they were. Where's old Jamieson? Tell him to come and have a dance or a song.'

Suddenly the expression of his face changed, and he struck the poker upon the table.

'Silence!' he roared; 'the company will be seated, and a song will be sung.'

There was a general scuffling towards the chairs, and then ensued a painful silence, for no one would sing, when up got Mr. Felix, and proceeded, in a voice which resembled a very faint Jew's-harp, to sing—

'When other lips and other hearts
Their tales of love shall tell.'

But he had not proceeded further when he suddenly vacated his throne, and disappeared from the room, thereby ending a scene which I was not sorry to see curtailed.

For two days Mr. Felix did not leave his bed, and for two more he remained in the house; a space of time which he occupied in asseverating that the Government should abolish the sale of that particular poison known as Scotch whisky. At the end of that period Mr. Felix again shouldered his gun and betook himself to the moor, where, in the mean while, I had found the grouse very plentiful. I noticed upon this occasion, however, that my friend, instead of keeping near me, avoided me as much as possible, and that there was a deal of unnecessary whispering between him and one of the gillies named John. By and by, indeed, we split up into two parties, and Mr. Felix, his dogs, and attendant, passed from sight over one of the broad slopes which lie around the base of Cairnantoul.

We had fixed to take luncheon at half-past twelve, by the side of a rivulet which came down from the hill through the moor; and great indeed was the alteration in my friend's face as he returned to the appointed place at that hour. He was positively radiant; his cheeks wore a fine pinky glow, and his eyes were bright and joyous.

'I heard you fire several times,' I said, as we sat down upon the dry warm heather. 'Did you kill anything?'

Felix pointed to the bag which the gillie had deposited at some distance from us.

'Rather!' he said, with a proud look.

'How many?'

'Four brace and a half.'

I looked at Felix: his eyes did not quail in the least. Had he not corroborative testimony in the bag?

'How many did you miss?'

'Not one the whole morning; but several packs rose out of shot.'

'Why, grouse-shooting has come upon you like an inspiration.'

Mr. Felix said nothing, but merrily began to cut the string of a champagne-bottle he had fished out of the stream. That night he returned with thirteen brace in the bag; and a happy man was he, in spite of the occasional qualms of sickness which he even yet felt as the result of his first acquaintance with the national drink of Scotland.

The following day he was nearly as successful; and, indeed, he had the hardihood to lay a wager on his prowess. But what puzzled me extremely was the fact that by no enticement whatever could I induce him to give me ocular demonstration of his skill. I wanted him to come with me across the lowest part of the moor, where the grouse were rather wilder; but he betrayed a strong preference for the slopes of Cairnantoul, where he never failed to disappear from sight. For several days this continued, and Mr. Felix gradually grew in our estimation. Jamieson no longer addressed him with an easy indifference to his authority. The gillies no longer winked at him behind his back. When he returned to the lodge in the evening he lay back in his easy-chair with the air of a man who knew he had deservedly won the respect of his fellows, and his general suavity and complaisance now knew no bounds.

Nevertheless the problem remained inexplicable. By

what charm did this sportsman, who had never loaded a gun before in his life, conjure the grouse to come to him and be bagged? One afternoon I was climbing up a somewhat rocky incline, the top of which was covered with patches of heather and grass. One of my dogs was pointing steadily, and as I advanced the pack rose into the air. Instead of two barrels four were discharged, and three of the birds fell. I immediately ascended the few remaining yards of the incline, and beheld before me John the gillie, who, as I could see from the smoke of the barrels, had just fired. Mr. Felix was close behind him, with the game-bag over his shoulder, and clearly keeping as sharp a look-out for observers as for points. The secret was at once revealed: to secure his reputation Felix had bribed this villain John to silence, and had commissioned him to shoot the grouse for him. It was the evil fortune of the gillie to be too successful, and thereby to have awakened suspicions which were now verified.

I withdrew gently from my position, where I had been unnoticed, and rounding the slope, appeared on the summit by another side. Felix, having been apprised of our proximity by the firing, had by this time secured his gun, and came forward with a pleasant smile to decide which of us had hit two of the three birds. The unhappy man was now so skilled in imposture, that the easy assurance with which he claimed the two birds as the result of his certain aim was a beautiful thing to witness. But I did not choose just then to confound him with the knowledge of his secret which I had won. I reserved that retribution for a better time, though I was determined that the graceless gillie should have no more grouse-shooting during the remainder of our month.

On returning to the lodge, however, Felix was confronted by intelligence which awoke his concern in matters of more importance than the making-up of a big bag. A railway in which he was a large shareholder had got into

dire difficulties, and his lawyer counselled him to return to London forthwith. Mr. Felix's resolution was taken on the spot. Indeed, could one wonder that his liking for grouse-shooting was a thing easily to be set aside? He left his guns, &c., for a friend to whom he intended offering the remaining portion of our month, and started for London on the following morning. As yet I have not revealed to him my acquaintance with his method of shooting grouse; and Mrs. Felix is doubtless pleased to know that her friends were in due course apprised of her husband's sportsman-like qualities by the arrival of certain perforated wooden boxes. But the story was not long in leaking out in the neighbourhood of Ballinclough; and the depraved gillie who entered into the plot had so little sense of shame as openly to boast of and laugh over the exploit among his companions.

V.

MR. FELIX IN STUBBLE.



ONE deception involves a thousand deceptions, say the approved text-books of morality. Those who took the trouble to read the record of Mr. Felix's adventures in the north will easily recognise the predicament in which he was now placed. He had acquired the reputation of being a first-rate shot, and there now lay before him the option of maintaining that reputation on some lowland pastures where no depraved gillie could possibly become his proxy,

or of discovering and confessing the mendacious trick by which he had sought to impose upon his friends while on the moors. Any one acquainted with the weaknesses of human nature need not be told which course of action Mr. Felix chose, nor that he determined, with all his energy, to acquire skill in shooting during the few days which had to elapse before the slaughter of partridges commenced.

Straightway, therefore, the incipient sportsman took to the killing of sparrows, and from morning till night the crack of his gun resounded through the trees which encompass his house. Several times, as I afterwards learned, he had nearly added peasant-shooting to the list of his performances; his gardener, especially, having to work, during this period, on what might be called the edge of his grave. Mr. Felix had begun by aiming at finches and blackbirds as they sat on the nearest rose-bushes or hopped across the lawn; but from that exciting exercise he speedily diverged into the shooting of flying birds, and here it was that he hovered on the brink of manslaughter for several days. Indeed, a butcher's boy, who had a charge of No. 8 shot pass just over his shoulder, went back to the village, and declared that the owner of the Beeches had gone mad; that he was roaming through the grounds in a semi-nude state, and trying hard to kill whomsoever approached the house. It needed only one or two repetitions of the story to make the whole village believe that my friend had tarred and feathered himself in order to represent a wild Indian, and that he had already shot two of his servants.

However, by the first of September Mr. Felix was so convinced of his expertness that he had now no more fear of being obliged to tell the story of his Highland escapade. It was arranged that in the mean time we should shoot over a large farm in the neighbourhood of the Beeches, where the birds were known to be plentiful. Mr. Felix

had himself provided the hens wherewith to hatch, in the meadows around the house, some five or six dozen eggs that had been forsaken; and doubtless his anticipations of easy shooting were greatly raised by the tameness of the young birds, which he was accustomed to take in his hand and mentally mark as material for the exercise of his deadly skill.

'Now,' he said, 'as soon as breakfast is over I'll show you how far my breech-loader will carry. I suppose the fellows who tell you they always shoot with breech-loaders at the beginning of the season mean you to suppose that they want to give the partridges a chance. Don't believe 'em. It is only to excuse themselves when they miss, for then they always declare the birds were out of shot. But I'll show you at what distance *my* breech-loader can kill.'

Mr. Felix was indeed so excited that he ventured to accept a cigar—always a hazardous experiment for him. When we at length started to meet the keeper, my friend had loaded his gun, for what purpose was not quite apparent; but as we arrived at the corner of the carriage-drive he peremptorily bade me stop.

'There's always a blackbird on that birch-tree at the end of the avenue, and when you make any noise he flies across and gives you a capital shot.'

'How often have you tried?'

'Hush!'

He crept forward a few paces, until he was about twenty yards from the birch-tree.

'You will be sure to kill somebody if you fire through the hedge,' I said.

At that moment Mr. Felix's favourite blackbird, with a loud whirr and cackle, dipped down from the tree and flew across the avenue. Bang! went the right barrel, and immediately afterwards my friend uttered a most unnecessary ejaculation.

'But,' he said, after a moment's hesitation, and not

without a guilty look, 'I think I knocked a feather out of his tail.'

It was quite unnecessary to point out to him that the blackbird was out of sight before he fired, for he knew it. But Mr. Felix, determined that he should at once show his own dexterity and the power of his breech-loader, was not to be baffled by the unconscionable swiftness of a blackbird; and the next moment I saw him level his gun at a robin that had hopped on the top of the hedge which divided the carriage-drive from a meadow wherein some people were working.

'Why, it's a robin,' I said.

'No, it isn't,' he replied, as he screwed down his right eye to the barrel.

Presently there was a loud report; the unfortunate bird tumbled down through the bush, and the next thing we saw was the apparition of an old woman who had followed the explosion with a loud shriek.

'O master, you've killed me, you've killed me, indeed you've killed me! You've shot me through and through; and the poor children as hasn't a bit o' bread to put in their mouths—'

'My good woman,' said Felix, 'what are you talking about?'

She came forward, with her lean brown arm laid bare, and sure enough there was blood trickling down from a scratch which a spent pellet had inflicted. Felix could not quite conceal his dismay, but he affected an air of sublime contempt.

'Faugh! What are you making a noise about? It's only a scratch, and here's five shillings for you.'

'Five shillings! O you monster!'

Such was the exclamation we heard as we moved on; for the old woman, calculating on the wound producing her a magnificent sum, was simply struck speechless by the offer of this insignificant salve. It was not until we

were almost out of hearing that she recovered the use of her voice, and then her indignation and sarcasm had rather lost their point.

We had not long made the acquaintance of the keeper when Mr. Felix's brace of pointers were at work, and my friend had both barrels on full cock. I saw that his hand trembled, and that there was a spasmodic action in the front of his throat similar to that which seems to trouble all gentlemen while making an after-dinner speech. He affected to be particularly interested in the working of the dogs, and yet there was a singular incoherence in his remarks.

Suddenly the pointer next Mr. Felix became motionless as though struck with a paralytic shock. Her whole frame trembled with excitement, and there was an involuntary crouching about the shoulders, a stretching of the neck and stiffening of the tail, which told its own story. Felix moved forward, his retriever at his heels. As he cautiously advanced a terrific whirr of wings arose immediately in front of him; my friend threw his head up and fairly dropped his gun with fright.

'All right, sir,' said the keeper coolly, as Mr. Felix, with a crimson face, stooped down to pick up his breech-loader. 'I've marked 'em. They're down near the river there; and we'd better follow them before going across the meadow.'

But the rosy flush had left Mr. Felix's face. He was now deadly pale.

'I'm afraid,' he said to me, in a mournful voice, 'that your cigar has not agreed with me. Pray go on yourself, and I will rest on this stile for a little time.'

'Shall I go back for some brandy, sir?' said the keeper, mildly compassionate.

'No,' replied Felix, with a slight shudder. 'Leave me here: I shall be well presently.'

He must be a very near friend indeed whose illness

you remember when the first of September opens with decent weather, plenty of birds, and dogs that know their business. Mr. Felix was very soon quite forgotten; and the first thing that recalled him to our recollection was the sudden discharge of two barrels near the spot where we had left him. The keeper was looking in that direction at the moment, and saw the smoke slowly rise into the air.

'I hope Mr. Felix isn't hurt,' he said.

'Why?'

'There were no birds on the wing when he fired; and perhaps some accident has set his gun off—leastways we'd better look: hadn't we, sir?'

When we returned to the spot where we had left Mr. Felix sitting, we found the sick man not only well, but in the best spirits.

'Here,' said he, with a triumphant smile, 'look at these!'

There could be no doubt about it: what he held up were three partridges, in prime condition.

'Where did you put 'em up, sir?' inquired the keeper.

'Here.'

'Here?'

'Why,' said Mr. Felix, reddening again, 'do you think I shot them on the ground?'

'Oh no, sir; only I axed the question. But they're fine birds, sir: and are you well enough to go with us now?'

'Yes, I'm better,' said Felix, delivering up the birds to the bag in a quite picturesque and imposing manner.

Thereafter we began to beat up a long field of turnips; and Mr. Felix strode out as manfully as the graceful rotundity of his person permitted.

'I don't think it bad,' said he, 'to knock over three birds with two charges. You know I'm not a crack shot; and really I don't think it bad.'

'Nor I either,' I replied. 'But do you know, Mr. Felix, that Smith declares there were no birds whatever on the wing when you shot?'

'I'll tell you what it is,' said Felix hotly, 'Smith is an impudent vagabond, who would be a poacher but that he gets well paid for being a keeper; and I assure you he is celebrated for being the very biggest liar in Kent, and that's saying a good deal. No birds up? Why, the man must either be blind or a raving maniac. I think the disgusting impertinence of fellows like him all arises from the Reform Bill; and I am amazed that a lot of gentlemen and landowners should give over the government of the country to cads and poachers. Conservative? Bah! I'll tell you what—this man is not my master yet; and I'll soon let him find out what his situation is worth if he does not become a great deal more respectful!'

There is always something wrong with a man's digestion or his temper (though these may be considered to be synonymous terms) when he begins to talk politics on the first of September; and until this day I am of opinion that had there not been some grounds for Smith's insinuation, Mr. Felix would not have been so angry when it was hinted that he had butchered three sitting partridges. However, there was no need to raise an unnecessary disturbance by insisting on the conviction of the murderer; for Mr. Felix, as he himself admitted, was not a 'crack shot,' and the consciousness that we believed in his prowess might nerve him for honester efforts.

Now on the very edge of this field of turnips which we had just entered lay a covey of birds, apparently but a few yards in front of Mr. Felix. With the tread of a cat he went forward, until he must have been able to see the partridges as they sat together among the deep green leaves. They were not over twelve yards from him when they rose, and the sudden flutter of wings was certainly sufficient to startle one not much accustomed to the sound.

Up went the gun, Mr. Felix clenched his teeth, and the next moment both barrels were sent after the birds. Not one fell.

For a moment Felix looked after the covey in mute and undisguised astonishment, following their low straight flight as if he expected every moment to see one of them drop. Then he turned and walked over to me.

'I've made a mistake,' he said.

'How?'

'I fancied this gun would carry as well as my muzzle-loader; indeed my gunmaker warranted it to shoot as hard and close as a Joe Manton. Now I find it will not kill at forty yards.'

'When did you try it?'

'Just now, at the covey that rose down my way.'

'The birds were about a dozen yards from you when they rose, and about twenty when you fired.'

Mr. Felix paused for a moment, apparently uncertain whether to become angry or treat the whole affair with contempt.

'That's your fun,' he said, with a sneer, as he walked off, 'and it's a pity you can't find another sort of joke.'

There were plenty of birds in the turnips, and there fell to the lot of Mr. Felix a sufficient number of those easy shots which even a farmer's boy would be ashamed to take. Felix, nevertheless, invariably fired the moment the birds rose from the ground; and as invariably missed. By the time we were at the end of the turnips, he had not added one to the bag.

He sat down upon a stile, and put his gun in a contemplative attitude across his knees.

'After all,' he said, 'doesn't it seem an ignominious thing for a man to be going after these poor birds, armed with all the appliances which science can invent, and shooting them down right and left? Why, it's downright slaughter: they have not a chance.'

'Oh yes, they have,' I hinted.

'I mean, sooner or later they are sure to be shot,' replied Felix, with a slight blush. 'Now I think there is something noble and fine in being able to shoot a seagull flying with an arrow. That is a triumph of personal skill; whereas here, it's your gunmaker, or the size of shot you use, or your dogs that do it all. I confess I don't see the fun of this kind of thing.'

My philosophic companion having for some minutes drummed on the stile with his heels, proceeded to try the contents of his pocket-flask; after which he began to bestir himself from his reverie.

'Now,' he said, 'I have a proposal to make. I don't think much of the working of these pointers. Will you take them, and I shall go off through this stubble up here with the retriever only? I like the idea of stalking game, because it makes you independent of dogs and adds to one's excitement.'

Without waiting for a reply, Mr. Felix rose and went, and I saw him no more for about an hour. But during that time we heard him firing briskly, and knew, by the sound of his gun, that he was roaming about in every possible direction, but always keeping far away from us. The number of cartridges he expended in that hour must have cost a fortune, and I was very anxious to see the result. At last we came upon him, seated on a bank, with a pocket-flask in his hand.

'You have had plenty of shooting,' I suggested.

'Oh, yes,' said Felix cheerfully, 'and I have something to show for it. Look there!'

He pointed to the long grass by his side; but his impatience to show us what he had killed caused him to lay down his pocket-flask and fish out the game himself. The gentle reader will probably disbelieve me when I say that there was actually a smile of triumph on his face as he held up—a jay, a rabbit, and two house-pigeons.

'That is all you have shot to-day?'

'Yes.'

Alas for the unhappy keeper! He burst out into an uncontrollable snigger of laughter, and in vain tried to conceal his misdeed by turning away his head. The face of Mr. Felix at this moment was awful to behold. I believe he would have given the half of his fortune to be allowed to shoot this man: the anger revealed by his eyes was terrible.

'Don't you think it a fair morning's work?' he said, with a forced smile, and with a tremendous effort to look as though he had not heard the keeper.

'Well, you know, Mr. Felix, you went out partridge-shooting.'

'But if I get a decent shot at things that are much more difficult to kill—*much* more difficult to kill—than partridges, why should I not take it? Now look at this rabbit. You know how hard it is to shoot a rabbit when he's at full speed; and I say that a dead rabbit is worth a dead partridge any day.'

All the time he spoke his eyes were fixed upon the recusant gamekeeper, who now, fearful of drawing down vengeance upon himself, moved off under the pretence of taking the retriever to get some water. Felix followed him with that unholy look, and presently said,

'If you think it worth while to go over this ground again to-morrow, instead of going at once into Herts, I promise you we shall not be troubled by this man's exuberant fun.'

'But he is the only keeper.'

'Then Mr. Summers must get another.'

'Who will know nothing about the country.'

'I tell you,' said Felix savagely, 'that I will not shoot another day in the company of such a low-bred wretch—*I will not do it.* I'll go into Herts, if you like, or anywhere else you please; but I come here to-morrow only on con-

dition that this man is discharged to-day. Why, he has not even offered to put the game I've shot into the bag!'

'He will do so presently,' I hinted; 'and don't you think that you yourself will be the only sufferer by refusing to shoot any more here?'

'That's all you know,' said he, with a horrible expression of malice. 'We get our poultry from Summers, and the moment he becomes disobliging, not one blessed chicken shall enter the house.'

After this terrible threat Mr. Felix would speak no more, and even refused to hear some plea of defective education on behalf of the poor keeper. He shouldered his gun, called on the retriever to follow him, and soon disappeared on another of those mysterious excursions which he seemed to love.

Before long we again heard him firing indiscriminately into space, and no sooner was this signal heard than the keeper came up to me, and said—

'Pardon, sir, but was Mr. Felix a-talking of me when he said as how he'd ask Mr. Summers to sack me?'

'Well, he was,' I said. 'You know you displeased him by laughing when he spoke of what he had shot.'

'But who could help laughin', sir?' asked the man plaintively. 'And if Mr. Felix tries to make trouble atween me and Mr. Summers, I hope as you'll tell him, sir, all about it, and how it happened. If Mr. Summers was here hisself, he'd say as he never see sich a sportsman go out shootin' on the first o' September.'

When we next stumbled upon Mr. Felix, he advanced with an easy consciousness which was evidently meant to conceal his pride. He came rapidly forward to us, holding out at arm's length a singular-looking object which looked more like a tattered scarecrow than a bird.

'I've got him this time,' said he.

'What is it?'

'Don't you see? A partridge!'

Sure enough he held in his hands a partridge, or rather the remains of a partridge, for the unfortunate bird had had his head nearly blown off, while the body was fairly riddled with shot.

'I didn't miss *him*, at all events,' said Felix, regarding the mass of ragged and clotted feathers; 'doesn't he look as if he had been speedily put out of pain?'

'He looks as if he had been tied to the muzzle of your gun before you shot.'

Mr. Felix replied with an uneasy laugh; and, having handed the bird to the keeper, passed on with us. Not twenty yards from where he had met us, one of the pointers was again struck motionless by a scent. Mr. Felix, forgetting his contempt for partridge-shooting, pressed cautiously forward; and as a covey of fine birds rose about fourteen yards ahead, he fired both barrels right into the thick of them.

One bird fell!

Oh, who shall paint the rapture that now overspread Felix's face, and battled there with the modest simper by which he strove to hide his glowing satisfaction! He spoke quite kindly to the keeper, and reassured the poor man's mind. He took the bird from the retriever's mouth and regarded it with profound wonder and admiration; he plucked one of its feathers and put it in his cap; he smoothed down its wings and said 'Poor bird,' and tried to look mournful. What struck me as being rather peculiar was the fact that the capture of his previous prize had not in the least affected him in the same way.

The day's work was now about over, and we prepared to return for dinner. On the way Mr. Felix had two shots, and missed them both; but such a small mishap could not lessen the self-glorification revealed by his voice and manner. As we walked through the meadow outside the lawn, and drew near to the house, Mr. Felix declared that he saw a rook on the gravel before the window, and in a

jocular way said he would soon cure him of his impudence. The bird hopped from the path on to the lawn, and Mr. Felix, creeping up almost on hands and feet, soon found himself at the railings surrounding the garden in front of the house. I saw him rest his gun on one of the smooth iron bars, and before any one could tell him that he was pointing straight underneath the window, he had fired. Then there was a crash of broken and splintered panes; for some of the shot had glanced from the gravel and smashed the window of the drawing-room.

Before Mr. Felix could recover from his surprise and dismay, a female figure appeared at the door, and from the top of the steps surveyed us three in awful silence. It was Mrs. Felix, whose naturally roseate face was now further inflamed by anger. A slight amount of reasoning soon told her that the man from the barrel of whose gun smoke still ascended was the culprit; and indeed I was sorry for the guilty wretch who had now to confront this terrible creature.

'This is partridge-shooting,' she said, with a cold sarcasm which rather belied the fury of her eyes; 'to go and kill a poor jackdaw in front of a house, and to fire through a room in which three children are playing. This is partridge-shooting, is it, Mr. Felix?'

'My dear—' said Mr. Felix; but he was interrupted by a shrill scream from his little girl, who, running down the steps, had come upon the mangled carcass of her pet jackdaw.

'O mamma, look at Jackie! He hasn't got any head but a bit of his bill, and he's all over blood. Who was it did it?'

'It was your papa, my girl, who took a jackdaw for a partridge, and broke the window and a mantelpiece ornament, and nearly killed three of his own children!'

Another of Mr. Felix's children came running out—a small boy of nine or ten years of age.

'Papa, what did you do with the dead partridge that Harry was going to bury in the meadow behind the summer-house? Harry found it this morning, and came back for a spade; and then he said he saw you lift it and carry it away.'

'I daresay you'll find it among the other jackdaws that your papa has shot,' remarked Mrs. Felix cruelly. 'A dead partridge is a very easy thing to shoot.'

'Mrs. Felix!' said the irate husband, with a face purple with rage and shame.

But Mrs. Felix turned contemptuously away from him, and marched with the gait of a queen along the hall and into the drawing-room. As for Felix, he looked as if he wished the earth would cover him; and his embarrassment was not the less painful and palpable on account of the ghastly smile with which he spoke of 'the ridiculous things a woman always says when she is in a temper, especially if her stock of brains be nothing to speak of.'



Drawn by G. Bowers.]

TWO WAYS OF GOING OVER.

MY FIRST DAY'S FOX-HUNTING.



BUT that was six or seven years ago, and I frankly admit that then I was a very indifferent horseman, although I was in happy ignorance of the fact—in its integrity. I was quite conscious that I did not ride very gracefully or over-comfortably, but I always discovered that the fault was my horse's and not mine. My cousins used to

think otherwise, and I have spent hours at a time in trying to induce them to give up their opinions on the subject and to adopt mine. I should explain that my cousins being orphans, and my father being their guardian, they lived with us as part of our family, and that whenever they rode out they seemed to think they had a right to insist upon my accompanying them. I at length got tired of riding out with my fair cousins, and of hearing them titter as, at their suggestion, we went down steep hills at full trot (I confess I was never great at trotting down hill), and so I resolved to take to *hunting*. I had heard that some horses, though the worst of hacks, made the best of hunters; and I thought that something of that kind might apply to horsemen also, and that I myself might shine more in the field than I did on the road. It was the end of February, and the Coverbury pack were meeting three times a week at places within easy reach of the Stonington Station. That was jolly! I could buy a hunter, keep him at Philley's livery-stables, and on hunting-days send him by train to Stonington, meet him, have a day's hunting unknown to my cousins, and thus enjoy myself with perfect freedom. I at once drew a cheque for 50*l*., with which I determined to buy the best hunter in all Blankshire! I called at Philley's and told him of my intention, and asked him how much a week he would require to 'board and lodge' my steed when purchased. The man smiled—he seemed to have a habit of smiling; but seeing from the seriousness of my manner that I was in earnest, he replied that his charge for keeping the horse would be thirty shillings a week; and he added that if I wished to buy a 'slapping' hunter he'd got just the horse for my money. 'Of course,' said he, 'you don't want a pony, but a good tall horse as'll keep you out of the dirt; and,' he added, scanning my figure from top to toe, 'you don't want no cart-horse to carry your weight neither.' I admitted that my ideas on the subject coincided with his

exactly, and he at once called to a stable-boy to bring out Iron Duke.

'There,' said Philley, as the horse was trotted into the yard, 'you might go a day's march and not come across such a hunter as that—extraordinary animal, I assure you, sir.' Not understanding the points of a horse, I deemed it prudent to indorse all that Iron Duke's owner chose to say in his praise; and I was thus compelled to acknowledge that his superior height (over sixteen hands), long legs, and slender build, gave him an advantage over every other horse I had seen in my life, as regards carrying a light-weight over a high-stone-wall country.

As we stood discussing the merits of the horse I happened to turn round, and there I saw the stable-boy grinning and 'tipping the wink' to a companion. This aroused my suspicions that all mightn't be right; so instead of at once buying and paying for the horse, I mustered up courage to say, 'Well, Mr. Philley, I like the horse's appearance, but are his paces as good as his looks? Will you let me try him with the Coverbury pack to-morrow?' Mr. Philley paused, thought a few moments, and then observed somewhat solemnly, 'Iron Duke, you see, sir, is a very valuable horse, dirt cheap at fifty pounds; in fact, it's giving him away, it is really, and I shouldn't like anything to happen to a horse like that whilst he's mine. We don't generally let him out for hunting; he's too good for most of our customers. But I'll tell yer what we'll do; we'll let you have him to-morrow for two guineas, and then (if you have no accident with him, as of course a gentleman like you won't) you can please yourself whether you have him or not. But if you *should* have an accident —of course accidents *will* happen sometimes—why, then the horse will be yours and the fifty pounds mine.' These terms seemed fair, and I accepted them, though not before they had banished my suspicions, and almost induced me to buy and pay for the horse there and then.

In the morning I called at Philley's for my hunter, and the boy brought him out bridled and saddled. As he stood straight in front of me his tall slim-built figure looked as sharp as a knife. I ventured to express this idea, but being doubtful as to whether sharpness was a good point or a bad one, I did so in a manner which might be taken as in earnest or in jest. The dealer chose to take it in the latter sense, and after laughing heartily at my 'good joke' assured me that I should find my horse 'as clever as a cat.' I then attempted to mount, and after some time (during which the ostler gave me a 'leg up' *and over the other side*) I was successful. The stirrup-straps having been adjusted, I set out for the station; and in my journey thither I was conscious that the commanding presence of my horse and the easy graceful attitude of his rider were fully appreciated by the numerous passers-by who stopped to stare at us—doubtless in admiration. One thing, though, nettled me a bit. Just as I got opposite the club, and was waving my whip to Fitz-Jones, De Brown, and some other fellows who were standing in the portico, my horse shied at a wheelbarrow, and I had some difficulty in getting comfortable in the saddle again. I gently remonstrated with the boy who was wheeling the barrow for not getting out of my way, when the impudent little scoundrel turned round and shouted, 'Oh, crikey! yer ain't very safe up there! Get inside; safer inside!' Whereupon the whole of the bystanders, including my friends of the club, burst out laughing. I of course could not descend from my high horse to chastise the young urchin, and as I couldn't think of anything smart to say to him, I treated him with the silent contempt he deserved, and rode on. But still, as I said before, this nettled me.

With the exception of this trifling *contretemps* I arrived safely at Stonington Wood, the place appointed for the meet. There was a good muster of ladies and gentlemen on horseback (some ten or fourteen of the gentlemen in

scarlet coats), and a condescending old gentleman with gray hair, neatly-trimmed whiskers, and rosy cheeks, remarked that there was a 'good field,' but I couldn't see it. All that I could see in the shape of a field was a small patch of turnips enclosed with a stone wall, the remainder of the surrounding country being common and wood, or, as I afterwards learned to call it, 'cover.' I soon began to appreciate my Iron Duke, for I found that he was the tallest horse there, and his legs seemed as light as an antelope's in comparison with the legs of the other animals, some of which seemed almost as heavy as cart-horses'.

The clock of the village church struck eleven, and three or four of the men in scarlet began to whip the dogs to make them go into the wood. I thought it was the proper thing to imitate their example, and seeing one of the dogs scrambling up the wall I instantly rode up and gave him what I thought a 'lift up behind' with my whip. To my astonishment the animal, instead of going over into the wood, tumbled down at my feet and yelped most piteously. Iron Duke, not liking the noise, turned round suddenly and kicked out, and the hound had an almost miraculous escape of having his skull cracked. All this happened in less than a minute, and seemed to cause a 'great sensation,' for two or three of the roughest of the men in scarlet were instantly attacked with a fit of cursing and swearing, of which I took no notice, believing it to be lavished on the head of the unfortunate hound. But I soon had my doubts; for one of the gentlemen in scarlet rode up to me, and with much severity informed me that he could not have *his* hounds 'served in that way.' I protested that it was an accident, and that I thought 'there could be no harm in doing what the others did.' With this explanation he seemed quite satisfied, for he at once left me, and even smiled as he did so. The dog must have been a young one, for as I passed two gentlemen

who were doubtless discussing puppies in general, and I suppose him in particular, I overheard one of them say, 'He's evidently green.' The dogs having got safely into cover, the ladies and gentlemen began to ride along the outside of the wood—cover, I mean—and I did the same, taking care, though, to keep well in the rear, that I might see what the others did. I kept clear of every one I could possibly avoid, as I found that the people who hunted at Stonington indulged in a peculiar kind of slang which I could not well understand. I had not gone far before I heard a loud laughing in my rear. I seemed to be familiar with the sound. I turned 'about' in the saddle, and who should I see but my cousins not twenty yards behind me! I was inclined to go home, and I should have done so only I saw that my cousins, besides being attended by Evans in livery, were accompanied by their old schoolfellow, Miss Trafford, a young lady to whom I had been introduced at our last county ball. To enjoy her presence I determined to brave all. I turned my horse round and raised my hat as much as the tight guard would let me, and in another moment I was at the mercy of my tormentors. 'Ha! ha! ha!' laughed my cousin Emily; 'we saw you stealing out of the garden-gate at six o'clock this morning.' 'Yes,' chimed in Julia, 'and with those splendid top-boots on! You thought to avoid us, did you?' 'I say, Adolphus,' continued Emily, 'when you hire a horse-box again, and don't want any one to know, don't let your name and destination be labelled on it like an advertisement! Ha! ha! ha!' I was completely sold, and I was obliged to acknowledge it; and when I heard that my cousins had actually ridden ten miles to the meet, whilst I had come by train, I felt that I must do something to retrieve my reputation in the eyes of Miss Trafford.

The cover was a very large one, and whilst we had been talking all the people had disappeared. I told the

dies where the dogs were; and Emily at once came to the conclusion that, if we went round the other way, which was shorter, we should meet the 'field' at 'Keeper's Clump.' Acting on this suggestion, we turned back and cantered round to the other side of the cover. As we did so I felt that field-riding was my *forte;* it was so much more comfortable than hard road-riding, and I at once resolved to make hunting my study and only amusement. My cousins continued to tease me as we went along; but to my delight Miss Trafford sided with me, thus giving me confirmation of the hope I had cherished at the ball, that she was not indifferent to the attentions I then paid her, slight as those attentions necessarily were.

Our passage of arms was suspended by our arrival at the far end of the cover, where the field were awaiting, as I was informed, the decision of the master as to what cover to 'draw' next. I wondered whether they had any artists with them, and what good could come of *drawing* a cover with which nearly every one seemed familiar. But this is parenthetical. A stone wall, about four feet high, separated us from the rest of the field.

'What have you lost?' said Emily to me, as my eyes wandered up and down the wall.

'Nothing,' I replied; 'I am looking for the gate.'

'Then you are looking for something you won't find this side a mile and a half; that's the road—over the wall. Come! give us a lead.'

Here was a pretty state of things! I, who had never in my life been over anything higher than a mushroom or wider than a gutter, and who had in my charge three ladies, suddenly required to give them a lead over a four-feet wall, in presence of the whole field! The perspiration stood in great drops on my brow, and I would have given any amount if I could but have sunk into my boots. But I couldn't; and all eyes being on me (including *hers*) I had no time to say my prayers. I had to choose at once

between disgrace and the chance of being 'sent to my account with all my imperfections on my head.' One glance at Miss Trafford decided me; and I put my horse's head towards the wall and then my spurs into his sides. When I was within three feet my courage failed me, and I pulled up; but it was *too late.* Iron Duke had already risen; and in doing so had nearly rolled me off, first over the cantle and then the pommel. Ten thousand years rolled over my devoted head in these few moments, and then all was still—*i.e.* as regards motion; but my ears were assailed by a deafening cheer—mixed, I must candidly admit, with some laughter. When I 'came to' I discovered that I was still alive, and still in the saddle, and that my horse was, in the most matter-of-fact way possible, spanning the wall like a bridge, fore-legs on one side, hind-legs on the other. I hastily congratulated myself that things were no worse, and then began to consider what was the proper step to be taken by a man in my situation. 'Pull him back!' 'Job him over!' 'Stick to him!' 'Get off!' and similar advice came to me from every quarter. I resolved to act on the 'get off' principle; and with some difficulty I *did* get off, taking care to be on the right side. I then endeavoured to pull the horse over with the reins; but he resisted with all the obstinacy of a costermonger's donkey—which circumstance seemed to add to the amusement of the field, for their laughter increased. Growing desperate, I slashed my whip several times over the animal's neck; at which treatment he kicked and plunged until, to my great delight, he kicked the wall down!

'Thank you for your easy lead, my dear cousin Adolphus!' said Emily, as she and the two other ladies came through the breach in the wall.

'You're quite welcome,' I was about to reply, when I was interrupted by a coarse-looking lad, whose spindle-like legs were covered with breeches and gaiters.

'I say, guv'nur,' said he, 'you rode your horse over that there wall about as well as I'd a-rode my mother's clothes-horse over!—do it again, do!'

The ladies could not refrain from laughter, in which I made a miserable attempt at joining them; and then I tried to remount. But this was a difficult task; for my legs were short, my horse's were long, and his recent adventure had made him fidgety, and I was at last reduced to the necessity of accepting an offer from the lad with the spindle legs to give me a 'leg up.' With his assistance (for which I gave him sixpence, and I have no doubt he threw his bad joke into the bargain) I managed to scramble into the saddle again. As we rode to the next cover I felt exceedingly sheepish, and the unfeeling laughter of my cousins, added to the now cool manner of Miss Trafford, and the quiet grimaces of old Evans, the groom (who of course kept pretty close to us), made me desperate, and I was determined to do something to recover my lost prestige, even if the next day's *Times* had to record a 'Fatal accident in the hunting-field at Stonington.' Emily asked me tauntingly, whether I had 'done leaping for to-day?'

'Not exactly,' I replied; 'I intend—'

'Will you take a lead from me?' she interrupted.

'I'll take any lead that *you* dare give me,' I replied haughtily.

'Done!'

And she had no sooner said the word than the fox broke from the cover, about two hundred yards in front of us, followed in a few moments by the hounds, so close together that (as I afterwards heard one gentleman remark to another) you might have covered them with a blanket. Away they went, and away went we after them. My enthusiasm was raised to the utmost pitch, and I was determined to stop at nothing. Emily and Julia kept on my left, a few yards in advance, whilst Miss Trafford, on

my right, kept about the same distance in my rear. The fox, luckily, had taken the open, and the ladies prophesied a half-hour's run with no checks. But before ten minutes of it were over, I perceived, about a hundred yards in front of us, a thick, well-laid quickset hedge, about four feet high, and as we neared it I thought I saw water glistening on the other side. There was no escape; my time had come; I was led in front, and driven in rear; and leap I must.

'Now for your lead!' cried Emily, waving her whip in the air as she cleared the fence and the brook beyond it. My horse followed bravely—and so should I, if I hadn't, by some unfortunate mishap or other, rolled out of the saddle, and in the midst of my victory fallen into the brook! As I lay sprawling on my back, and before I had time to think where I was, I saw the belly of Miss Trafford's horse as he carried her over the fence, the brook, and me!

'Stop my horse! stop my horse!' I roared, as I came dripping wet out of the brook. 'Stop my horse!' But I earnestly hoped that no one would stop him, for this last *contretemps* had considerably damped my ardour and cooled my courage; and I thought that if nobody *did* 'stop my horse,' he would eventually find his way to the pound; and his absence would afford me a decent pretext for going home. To my horror, though, Iron Duke was brought back by the wretched lad of the spindle legs. 'Be the saddle greased, sir?' said he, wiping it with his nasty dirty pocket-handkerchief. I could have kicked him, and should have done so, only I thought he might have kicked back, and so I swallowed his affront, and actually gave him another sixpence. Having learned from him the road to the station, I was just stealing off when I heard in my rear the cry of 'Tally-ho back!' The fox had come back—doubled, I mean,—and I was forced to join the others and run after him again. But, fortu-

nately for me, he did not run far before the dogs caught him and killed him, and then one of the men in scarlet cut off his nice long tail and gave it to Emily. She actually accepted it, although I am nearly sure she had never seen the man before in her life! I thought young ladies ought to accept presents from no gentlemen but their relatives and accepted suitors; and, besides, I don't believe that this man *was* a gentleman, for when I whipped the hound to make him get over the wall (which, as I have before stated, he most unreasonably declined to do), this fellow was the loudest in his oaths and curses, which he showered broadcast on the hound, or my horse, or something—I have never ascertained what—and in the presence of ladies! Emily said something about making a hair-brush of the fox's tail (what an absurd idea! but she always was queer); and as the man cut off the fox's head, she gave me to understand that that would be mine if I asked for it. I *did* ask for it; but for some unaccountable reason or other, I *didn't get it.* The remainder of the poor fox was thrown to the dogs, who soon tore him to pieces and ate him. It occurred to my philosophic mind, as I witnessed this spectacle, that the fox, like me, was a hero; but, also like me, an unsuccessful one. What a number of men, women, horses, and dogs to conquer one little fox! These and similar reflections were soon cut short, for the dogs having finished their lunch the men and women began to think about theirs; in fact, Sir John Hausie had invited them all, including me, to lunch with him at the Manor House, about half a mile distant. As we journeyed thither I began to feel very uncomfortable, for my coat, waistcoat, and shirt, although not dirty (for the water in the brook was clean), were wet through, and, the warmth of exercise and enthusiasm having subsided, I felt very cold. When we arrived at Sir John's, I was so stiff with cold that I could scarcely dismount, which Sir John observing, he came and very kindly accosted me. He also

inquired as to the cause of my fall—spill, he called it—and offered me the loan of a coat whilst mine was hastily dried at the kitchen fire. Sir John was an exceedingly pleasant man, and had a jolly, cheerful, laughing face, and we soon understood each other. I accepted his proffered loan with many thanks, and then took Miss Trafford in to lunch. As I sat by her side in the baronet's coat, and gracefully helped her to sherry, the frost of her manner gradually thawed; and when we returned to remount we were as jolly as topers—sand-boys, I mean. I of course assisted her to get into the saddle; but I was so stiff and so giddy (from the excitement of the morning) that I very nearly let her down. We were some time without finding another fox; and as my cousins had gone off with old Evans and Captain De la Grace, and as Miss Trafford seemed so amiable, I determined to improve the occasion. We were on the common just outside Sir John's park, the beauties of which I was very particular in admiring; and having thus got Miss Trafford to lag behind, I took the opportunity of unbosoming my heart to her. I got very excited, and my voice trembled with emotion (or something of that sort), as I made her a pathetic offer of my heart and hand. I paused (as well as my excitement would allow me, for it had brought on the hiccups), and she replied. I can't remember exactly what she said, but it was something about sparing me the pain of a refusal, and about not marrying a man who couldn't take a fence. I offered to jump the park wall, if she would only listen to my suit. She agreed; and bracing up all my spirits, I rode full tilt at the wall; and over I went, leaving my horse on the wrong side! And as I turned an involuntary somersault I thought I heard sounds like 'the receding footsteps of a cantering horse.' (Note.—This is a quotation from some lines I afterwards wrote to Miss Trafford.) There was then a slight break in the thread of my thoughts, and after that I found myself lying in the midst of some

young fir-trees, whilst Iron Duke was quietly browsing on the leafless twigs of a tree on the other side of the wall. Gentle reader! I am sure you must feel for my unfortunate position. I will not torture you further by relating the painful particulars of how I scrambled over the wall; how I got on Iron Duke, only to tumble off again; how I nearly broke my neck before I got home; how Philley declared I had broken the horse's knees; how he made me pay 50*l.* for the animal; how I sold him the next week for 10*l.* (less 2*l.* for carriage); and, worst of all, how Miss Trafford jilted me, and my cousins—cruel girls—laughed at my misfortunes and made sport of my troubles. Indeed with all these we have nothing to do, for they happened after 'My First Day's Fox-hunting.'

MY FIRST AND LAST STEEPLE-CHASE.

In the year 1859, the Irish militia regiment in which I had the honour to hold a commission was disembodied; but, as a reward for our distinguished services at Portsmouth, where we mounted guard daily on the dockyards for more than twelve months, each subaltern was presented with a gratuity of six months' pay—a boon that must have been highly appreciated at the time by our much-enduring and long-suffering tailors, into whose pockets most of the money, in the end, found its way.

Dick Maunsel, the senior lieutenant, and myself were cousins, and (as the old chief never lost a chance of telling us when we got into trouble) 'always hunted in couples.' Our fathers' allowance had been liberal. We were free from debt—that 'Old Man of the Sea,' which too often hangs like a millstone about the British subaltern's neck—and, finding ourselves at liberty, as a matter of course determined to go off somewhere and get rid of our pay together. Much beer and tobacco were consumed in the various 'corobberys' held to talk the matter over; and at length it was decided that we should take a lodge at a small watering-place, well known to both, on the south-west coast of Ireland, and there abide until something better turned up.

I don't think, under the circumstances, we could have made a much better choice. The salmon and sea-fishing were excellent; when the shooting season came round, most of the moors in the neighbourhood were free to us. The summer had been unusually hot; we were tired of town life, and longing to divest ourselves of the 'war

paint,' 'bury the hatchet,' and get away to some quiet bay by the Atlantic, where we could do what seemed right in our own eyes, free from the eternal pipeclay and conventionalities with which we had been hampered. 'Last, not least,' at a ball given before the regiment left Ireland, we had met two girls, sisters, who usually spent the season there, and, if the truth must be told, I believe they had hit us so hard we were 'crippled' from flying very far. So, after an impartial distribution of the regimental plate, and a rather severe night at mess, to finish the remains of the cellar, we bade farewell to our companions in arms, and found ourselves once more in 'dear old dirty Dublin,' *en route* for the south.

One evening, about six weeks after our arrival at Aunaghmore, we were lying on the cliffs, watching the trawlers as they drifted slowly up with the tide. The day had been dark and misty, with some thunder far out at sea; but it cleared up as the sun went down, and I was pointing out to Dick, who had been unusually silent, the remarkable likeness between the scene before us and one of Turner's best-known pictures, when he interrupted me suddenly, saying—

'I'll tell you a story, Frank. When a boy, I remember starting one morning with poor Ferguson (the owner of Harkaway) to ride one of his horses in a private match. We took a short cut across an old mountain road, and coming out on the brow of a hill which commanded one of the finest views in Ireland, I pulled up my horse to call Ferguson's attention to it. "For heaven's sake, sir," he said impatiently, "think on something that will do you good." And just at this moment, old man, I feel half inclined to agree with him. How much money have you left?'

Without speaking, I handed him my purse, the contents of which he counted slowly over, saying, 'I think we shall have enough.'

'Enough for what?' I asked.

'For a ball,' he replied coolly. 'The people here have been very civil to us, and we owe them some return. There are plenty of girls in the neighbourhood to make a very good one: men are scarce; but we can ask the "Plungers" over from —— Barracks. Besides, I promised Emily last night, and there's no getting out of it.'

I ventured mildly to suggest that the regiment didn't get out of the last under a couple of hundred, and that we had not half that between us.

'My dear fellow,' he replied, 'this is quite another affair altogether. We can borrow the club archery tent for a ballroom. There are many things, game, &c., to be had for nothing here. My sisters are coming over on a visit; they will look after the details. It will be a great success, and we shall only have wine and lights to pay for.'

'And how far,' I asked, with a slight sneer, 'will the money left go in getting those, not to speak of other essentials that must be provided?'

'I have arranged all that as well,' answered Dick, with the air of a man who had thoroughly mastered the subject. 'The races here come off the end of August. There is a 50*l.* Plate to be run for on the flat, and a steeple-chase as well. I know all the horses likely to start. With one exception (Father B.'s) ours can give them a stone for either event. The priest can't run his horse; the new bishop has been down on him. We can send for ours: plenty of time for a rough preparation. Thanks to the hot weather, and that confounded drill, you can still ride eleven stone. There now, what more do you want? Come along to the lodge, and we will talk the matter over comfortably.'

I certainly had my misgivings as to the practicability of Dick's scheme, but knew him too long and well to doubt his attempting it at all events. I could, of course, refuse to join, and leave him to his own devices; but we

had pulled through too many scrapes together for that. To do him justice, he generally succeeded in whatever he undertook; and whether it was owing to his eloquence, some of his father's old claret, or both combined, before we separated that night I had entered heart and soul into his plans.

We lost no time in commencing our preparations. Within a week the horses had arrived; then Dick's sisters —two fine light-hearted girls, full of fun and mischief— came over. After that there was no rest for me. No unhappy adjutant of a newly-embodied militia or volunteer regiment ever had more or a greater variety of work on hand. Sunrise generally found me in the saddle, giving the horses a gallop on the sands—a performance which had to be repeated twice during the day, Dick's weight, some sixteen stone, preventing him from giving me any assistance. I was overhead in love, besides, and four hours at least had to be devoted to the object of my affections. We kept open house; game and fish had to be provided for the larder, and the girls were always wanting something or other from the neighbouring town, which they declared only I could get; so between all, my time was fully occupied, and seemed to fly.

If Mr. Mill's bill for giving ladies the franchise had been in force then I think Dick and myself would have had a fair chance of representing the county. So soon as our intention to give a race ball was known, we became the most popular men in it. Offers of supplies and assistance came pouring in from all quarters. Plate, china, and glass arrived so fast, and in such quantities, the lodge could not contain them, and we were obliged to pitch the tent. As the time drew near, the preparation and bustle increased tenfold. Our life was one continual picnic. From early morning until late at night, the house was crowded with girls, laughing, flirting, trying on ball-dresses, and assisting in the decorating of the tent. We

never thought of sitting down to dinner, but took it where, when, and how we could. *Ay de mi!* I have been in some hospitable houses since, where the owner kept *chefs*, and prided themselves, not unjustly, on the quality of their cellars; but I never enjoyed myself so much, and, I fear, never shall, as those scrambling dinners, though the bill of fare often consisted of cold grouse, washed down by a tankard of beer—taken, too, standing in the corner of a pantry, surrounded by a host of pretty girls, all of them engaged in teasing and administering to my wants.

Early one morning, about a week before the races were to come off, I was engaged as usual, exercising Dick's hunter on the course, when, at a little distance, I saw a horse in body-clothes, cantering along with that easy stride peculiar to thorough-breds. For some time the rider appeared anxious to avoid me, increasing the pace as I came near, until the animal I rode, always headstrong, broke away and soon ranged alongside.

'Whose horse is that?' I inquired of the groom.

'My master's, yer honour,' he replied, without a smile, slackening his pace at the same time, as mine raced past.

When I succeeded in pulling up again, the fellow was galloping away, in another direction. I had seen enough, however: there was no mistaking those flat sinewy legs. So, setting the horse's head straight for the lodge, I went up to Dick's room. He was in bed, but awake; and though his face slightly lengthened when I told him I was certain the priest's horse had arrived, he answered coolly enough—

'You need not look so serious, Frank; at the worst, it is only a case of selling Madman, and I have had a good offer for him. It is too bad of the priest, though, to spoil our little game. They told me the bishop had sat on him; but of course he will run in another name. I should have known an old fox like that would have more than one earth. He won't be able to go in for the double

event, that is certain. His horse can't jump. The steeple-chase is ours; so come and have a swim. After breakfast we will see what can be done.'

Unfortunately there was no help for it. The priest's horse had carried off a Queen's Plate at the Curragh, and, safe and well at the post, could win as he pleased. It was too late for us to draw back, however, even if we were disposed that way. The invitations for the ball (which was to come off the night of the races) were out. So, consoling ourselves as well as it was possible under the circumstances, we continued our preparations, looking well after the horses, determined not to throw away a chance.

Misfortunes seldom come alone. The day before the race, so ardently looked forward to, arrived at last. I had been engaged in unpacking the flowers that were arriving all the afternoon from the neighbouring conservatories, while Dick was amusing himself brewing cold punch in the lodge. The girls were out walking; and, when my work was over, I took a stroll along the beach to meet them. Up to this time the weather had been glorious; such a summer and autumn as few could remember: but now I saw, with some anxiety, there was every appearance of an unfavourable change. Although not a breath of wind stirred, the ground-swell broke heavily on the bar, and there was a greenish look in the sky where the sun was setting, that boded no good. The curlews were unusually noisy, their clear shrill whistle resounding on all sides, and large flocks of sea-birds were flying in towards the land. A fishing-boat had just made fast to the pier, and the owner came forward to meet me.

'What luck this evening, Barney?' I inquired.

'Just middlin', yer honour. There's a dozen of lobsters, a John Dory, and a turbot. I'll send them to the lodge. The oysters went up this morning—iligant ones, they wor; raal jewels.'

'All right, Barney—what do you think of the weather?'

'Sorra one of me likes it, at all. Them thieves of seals are rollin' about like *purposes*, and it isn't for nothin' they do that same. It'll be a Ballintogher wind, too, before long, I'm thinkin'.'

'A what?' I exclaimed.

'The very question the captin axed my brother. It was the first time iver he went to say, and they wor lyin' somewhere off Afrikay. The captin was walkin' the quarter-deck, when my brother comes up to him, and says, "Captain Leslie, you had better shorten sail."

'"Why so?" ses the captin, very sharp.

'"Bekase it's a Ballintogher wind."

'"And what the d—l wind may that be?"

'"Oh murther!" ses my brother. "There you are, wandherin' about the world all yer life, and didn't hear of a Ballintogher wind, when there isn't a gossoon in my counthry doesn't know the village it comes from, and that it niver brought anything but cowld storm and misforthin' along with it."

'Well, with that, they all tuk to laughin' like to split their sides at my brother, an' the captin, he towld him to go forrid and mind his work; but faith, they worn't laughin' two hours afther, when the ship rowled the masts out of her, and they wor wracked among the haythens. But wind or no wind, yer honour, I suppose the races will come off?'

'So I hear, Barney.'

'I'm towld there's to be a fight between the Flahertys and the O'Donnells; but shure av the priest's there, it's no use for them to try.'

'Why not, Barney?'

'He's mighty handy with a hunting-whip, an' has got a bad curse besides. He hot Mickey Devine over the head, for tryin' to rise a row at the fair of Dingle, and left a hole in it you might put your fist in. It was no great

things of a head at the best of times, but faith, he's quare in it at the full of the moon iver since. He cursed Paddy Keolaghan, too, last Easter, an' the luck left him. His nets wor carried away, the boat stove in, and the pig died. I don't give in to the pig myself, for they let him get at the long lines afther they wor baited; and sure enough when the craythur died, there was fifteen hooks in his inside, enough to kill any baste. Besides, his reverence is very partikler, an' wouldn't curse a Christian out of his own parish; but it's not lucky to cross him anyhow; an' if he's there to-morrow, sorra bit of fun we'll have. They say yer honours are for givin' a ball afther the races.'

'So we are, Barney; and that reminds me—tell the girls to come up the next night, and we'll give them a dance before the tent is taken down.'

'Long life to yer honour! It's proud and happy they will be to go. Here's the young ladies comin'. Good-evenin', sir! We'll be on the coorse to-morrow, an' see you get fair play, anyhow.'

The tent-ropes flapped ominously that night as we turned in, and before morning a storm came on which increased to a hurricane, when our party assembled for breakfast, and looked out disconsolately enough at the boiling sea, dimly visible through the driving rain and spray that dashed in sheets of water against the glass. Already numbers of the peasantry, on their way to the course, were staggering along the road, vainly trying to shelter themselves from the furious blast which made the very walls of the lodge shake. Taking advantage of a slight lull, we managed to get a young fir-tree propped up against the pole of the tent, and had just returned to the house when a well-appointed four-in-hand came at a sharp trot up the avenue.

'Here come the Plungers,' said Dick. 'Plucky fellows to drive over fourteen miles such a morning.'

While he was speaking a dozen bearded men got down

and stalked solemnly into the room. In a few minutes the ladies of our party made their appearance, and before long the new comers were busily engaged in some fashion or another. I have often admired the way in which Irish ladies contrive to make the 'lords of the creation' useful, but never saw it more strongly exemplified than on the present occasion. Here you might see a grave colonel employed in the composition of a lobster salad; there a V.C. opening oysters as industriously as an old woman at a stall; while in a snug corner, a couple of cornets were filling custard cups and arranging flowers. To do the gallant fellows justice they accepted the situation frankly, and set to work like men, while at every fresh blast the girls' spirits seemed to rise higher; and before long a merrier party could hardly be found anywhere. Twelve o'clock had now come round, at which time, it was unanimously agreed, the day must clear up; and a slight gleam of watery sunshine appearing, we all started to carry the things over to the supper-room of the tent. As we mustered a tolerably strong party, in less than an hour this was effected, not, however, without sundry mishaps; one poor cornet being blown right over a fence, into a wet ditch, with his burden.

We were all so much engaged laying out the tables, that the increasing darkness of the day was scarcely remarked until a vivid flash of lightning, followed by a loud peal of thunder which broke directly overhead, made the boldest pause for a moment in his occupation. The storm, which had gone down considerably, burst forth again worse than ever, the tent-pole swayed to and fro like a fishing-rod, and the fir-tree we had lashed alongside for additional security threatened every moment to come down by the run. Matters were beginning to look serious, when Dick, snatching a carving-knife from the table, cut an opening in the wall of the tent, through which we all bolted into the open air. Hardly had we got clear of the

ropes, when the tent-pole snapped, the pegs gave way, the roof flew off down the wind, and with a crash of broken glass, heard distinctly above the howling of the wind and sea, the whole fabric came to the ground, burying all our materials and the greater part of the supper in the ruins.

All was over now,—'the stars in their courses' had fought against us. There was no use in contending against fate and the elements; so, after seeing the girls safe in shelter, and leaving the dragoons to test the merits of Dick's cold punch, I filled my largest pipe with the strongest cavendish, and had walked round to the lee of the house, to blow a cloud in peace, and think over what was best to be done, when a window opened above, and looking up, I saw a bright sunny face framed against the dark scowling sky, and heard a voice call out, 'Wait there one moment, Frank; I am coming down.'

Without giving me time to reply, the face disappeared, but immediately afterwards a small slight figure, closely muffled up, glided round the corner, and put its arm in mine, while a pair of blue eyes looked up appealingly in my face.

'Don't look so downhearted, Frank, or you will make me cry. I could hardly keep from it, when I saw the tent in ruins, and heard that dreadful crash. All Lady ——'s old china, I promised to take such care of, and the flowers, and Mrs. ——'s dinner service, that has been in the family for four generations. It is a downright calamity; but we are determined, happen what will, to have the ball, and I want you to come to look at a barn we saw the other day.'

'But you cannot think of going out in such weather!'

'Not by the road—the sea is all across it. But we can go by the fields. Come now, and take great care of me.'

We did reach the barn, though with great difficulty; and, at first sight, a more unlikely or unpromising place could hardly be found. In one corner stood a heap of

straw and a winnowing machine, under which half a dozen rats scampered as we came in. The roof was thatched, and in several places we could see the sky through it. Long strings of floating cobwebs hung from the rafters, and the rough walls were thickly coated with dust. There were two storeys to it, however; the floor of the upper one was boarded and seemed sound. Taking out a note-book, my companion seated herself on an old garden-roller, saying—

'Go down-stairs, Frank, and finish your smoke; I want to think for five minutes; or you may stay here, if you promise not to speak until I give you leave.'

I gave the required pledge, and, lighting my pipe, lay down in a corner watching the rats peering out with their sharp, black beady eyes at the strange visitors, and rather enjoying the confusion of the spiders, who, not relishing the smoke, were making off out of reach as fast as they could. Before long my companion called me over, to give her directions, which were, to go back to the lodge, and bring all the volunteers I could get, as well as some materials, of which she gave me a list.

On my way I met one of the stewards, who told me the races had been postponed until four o'clock in the afternoon, and on reaching the lodge found Dick and the officers engaged in recovering 'salvage' from the tent. Getting out a wagonette, I soon had it filled with volunteers, and drove them over to the barn, where we once more set to work, and for the next few hours the rats and spiders had a bad time of it.

I was hard at work converting some rough deal boards into a supper-table, when a little boy handed me a note, saying—

'They are clearin' the coorse, yer honour; you haven't a minit to lose; I brought down a "baste" for you.'

The note was from Dick, telling me the first race would be run off at once. There was a dressing-room

provided on the ground, so, jumping on the horse, I rode down.

The storm, after doing all the harm it well could to us, had now cleared off, and the scene on the course was lively and animated enough. A dozen frieze-coated farmers, headed by an old huntsman in scarlet, were gal-



loping wildly about to clear the ground, the usual 'dog' being represented, on this occasion, by a legion of curs, barking at the heels of stray donkeys, sheep, cows, and goats, as they doubled in and out, to avoid the merciless whips of their pursuers; and when at last they were driven off, the people broke in on the line, and the whole place appeared one mass of inextricable confusion, until

the priest, accompanied by the stewards, was found. The fisherman certainly had not belied his reverence. More than once I saw his whip descend with a vigour that made itself felt even through the thick greatcoats worn by the peasantry, causing the recipient to shrink back, shaking his shoulders, and never feeling himself safe until he had put the nearest fence between him and the giver. Soon his stalwart figure, mounted on a stout cob, was the signal for a general *sauve qui peut*, and the mob gradually settled into something like order, leaving the course tolerably free.

Six horses came to the post for the first race, which was about three miles on the flat, the priest's of course being the favourite, and with reason. It was a magnificent dark chestnut, with great power and symmetry, showing the 'Ishmael' blood in every part of its beautiful frame, Dick's hunter, although thorough-bred, and with a fair turn of speed, looking like a coach-horse beside it. The only other competitor entered worth notice was a light bay, high-bred, but a great, staring, weedy-looking brute, evidently a cast-off from some racing-stable.

At the word 'Off!' a fair start was effected. The 'bay,' however, had hardly taken a dozen strides, when it came down, giving the rider an ugly fall. After rolling over, it sat up like a dog, and stared wildly about; then, jumping up suddenly, galloped into the sea, where it lay down, apparently with the intention of committing suicide. Before we had gone a mile, all the other horses were shaken off, and the priest's jockey and myself had it all to ourselves. He was a knowing old fellow, and evidently did not wish to distress his horse, keeping only a few lengths ahead, until within the distance-post, when he let him go, cantering in a winner by about twenty yards, and receiving a perfect ovation from the people.

In half an hour the bugle sounded for the horses to fall in for *the* race. A steeple-chase being always the

great event on an Irish course, we were about to take our places, when Dick came up with rather a long face, and whispered—

'I am afraid the luck is against us still, Frank. Look at that gray. He has been kept dark until now. Before seeing him I backed you rather heavily with the priest. It was our only chance to get out.'

The more I looked the less I liked the appearance of either horse or man. To a casual observer the first was a plain animal, cross-built, rough in the coat, and with remarkably drooping quarters; but, on closer inspection, a hunter all over, if not a steeple-chaser, although an attempt had evidently been made to disguise his real character. The saddle was old and patched; the bridle had a rusty bit, with a piece of string hung rather ostentatiously from it; the rider might once have been a gentleman, but drink and dissipation had left their mark on what was originally a handsome face. His dress was slovenly and careless to a degree, but he sat his horse splendidly, and his hand was as light and fair as a woman's. He returned my look with a defiant stare.

'That fellow looks dangerous,' said Dick; 'but I suspect he is more than half drunk. Make a waiting race until you see what he is made of. Above all things keep cool, and don't lose your temper.'

I had perfect confidence in the mare I rode. She had been broken by myself, and many a long day we had hunted together over the big pastures of Roscommon and Meath. There was a thorough understanding between us. My only anxiety was as to how she would face the crowd, who were collected in thousands about every jump, barely leaving room for the horses to pass, and yelling like a set of Bedlamites let loose. With the exception of the last fence, there were no very formidable obstacles. It was a stone wall, fully five feet high, built up loose, but strong, and rather a severe trial at the end of a race, if

the pace was severe throughout. There was no time for thinking now, however. The word was given, and we were away.

About a dozen horses started—all fair animals, with that cat-like activity in negotiating a fence so remarkable in Irish hunting. We had hardly gone a mile, however, when the want of condition began to tell, and they fell hopelessly to the rear, leaving the race to the gray, my mare, and a game little thorough-bred ridden and owned by one of the dragoon officers.

Up to this time I had followed Dick's directions to wait on the gray, a proceeding evidently not approved of by the rider, for, turning round in his saddle as he came down on a water jump, he said, with a sneer—

'You want a lead over, I suppose.'

I made no reply, and he went at the river; but whether by accident or design, when within a few yards of the brink, his horse bolted, dashing in among the crowd. The dragoon's swerved slightly to follow; the rider, however, would not be denied, and sent him through it; while my mare, cocking her ears, and turning her head half round, as an old pointer might do at seeing a young one break fence, flew over like a bird, and settled steadily to her work on the other side.

For some distance the dragoon and myself rode neck and neck, though the pace was beginning to tell on his horse, who was slightly overweighted. Our friend on the gray now raced alongside, and galloping recklessly at an awkward ditch, which he cleared, took a lead of a dozen lengths, and kept it until within a short distance of the last fence, when he fell back, allowing us to get to the front once more.

I think fear was the last thing uppermost in my mind as I rode at it. My blood was fairly roused, and passing a carriage a minute before, I got a glance from a pair of blue eyes that would have made a coward brave. Still,



Drawn by G. B. GODDARD.]

IN A SECOND WE WERE SAFE ON THE OTHER SIDE.

[See p. 161.

with all that, I could not avoid a slight feeling of anxiety as it loomed across, looking about as dangerous an obstacle as the most reckless rider could desire at the end of a race. If stone walls 'grew,' I could have sworn it had done so since I crossed it on Dick's hunter the evening before. The people had closed in on both sides until there was scarcely twenty feet of clear space in the middle, and evidently a row of some sort was going on. Sticks were waving wildly about, and a dozen voices shouted for me to stop, while hundreds called to go on. The gray was creeping up, however. I had faced as bad before, when there was less occasion; so pulled the mare up to a trot until within a few yards, when I let her go with a shout she well knew, and in a second we were safe on the other side. The dragoon's horse refusing, the gray, who came up at full speed, chested it heavily, and horse, rider, and wall came rolling over to the ground together, while I cantered in alone.

I had hardly received the congratulations of the stewards, when Dick came up, looking flushed and excited. As he grasped my hand, he said hurriedly—

'Why didn't you stop when I shouted?'

'It was too late. But what is wrong?'

'That scoundrel on the gray bribed a couple of fellows to add six inches to the height of the wall during the storm this morning. They raised it nearly a foot. Some one told the priest, but not until you were in the field. He has caught one of them, the other got away. As for the fellow himself, his collar-bone is smashed, and the horse all cut to pieces. He couldn't expect better luck. It was a near thing, though. I don't know how the mare got over it. She must have known,' he added, patting her neck, 'what a scrape we were in.'

The usual hack races for saddles and bridles followed, and the day's sport came to an end without a fight, thanks to the priest, whose exertions to keep the peace would

have satisfied a community of Quakers, although they might not approve of the mode by which the object was effected.

We had hardly finished dinner at the lodge, when the carriages with our guests for the ball began to arrive, those from a distance looking with dismay at the wreck of the tent, that still lay strewed on the lawn. They were all directed forward to the barn, however, whither we were soon prepared to follow.

Although my confidence in the ability and resources of the ladies of our party was nearly unlimited, I could hardly avoid feeling some slight misgivings on entering the barn, knowing the short time they had to work in, and how heavily the mishap of the morning must have told against them. All, however, agreed that they had seldom seen a prettier room. The walls and roof were completely covered with fishing-nets, filled in and concealed by purple and white heath. The effect was remarkably good; and if the storm had deprived the supper-table of many of the light dishes, quite enough was left to satisfy guests who were not disposed to be critical.

I shall not detain the reader by giving a description of the ball, which proved a complete success, more than compensating us for the trouble and anxiety we had undergone. It was seldom the girls in the neighbourhood had a chance of enjoying themselves in that way, and they seemed resolved to make the most of it. Human endurance, however, has its limits. Towards morning the band, whose 'staying powers' were sorely tried, began to show symptoms of mutiny. Threats and bribes (the latter too often administered in the shape of champagne) were tried, and they were induced to continue for another hour. The result may easily be anticipated: they broke down hopelessly, at last, in the middle of 'Sir Roger.' A sudden change in the music made us all stop, and to our

dismay we found one half of the performers playing 'God save the Queen.' The others had just commenced 'Partant pour la Syrie,' while the 'big drum' was furiously beating the 'tattoo' in a corner. Turning them all out, we threw open the windows. A flood of sunshine poured into the room, and the cool fresh sea breeze swept joyously round, extinguishing the lights. This was the signal for a general departure. One by one our fair guests drove away, leaving

'The banquet-hall deserted.'

The last man to go was the priest. As he mounted his horse, I saw him hand Dick a sheaf of dingy-looking bank-notes, and they parted, hoping to meet again the following season, when the latter pledged himself to bring something out of his own stable to race against the mare. But we only appeared there once since in public, and that was at a wedding. Before the next autumn came round we had settled down into steady married men. I still hunt, but have grown stouter, and the old mare has given place to a weight-carrier. She draws my wife and children to church regularly, however, and though rather more matronly looking, is as full of life and spirit as when she started with her master to win his first and 'last' steeple-chase.

HOW I WON MY HANDICAP.

TOLD BY THE WINNER.

It was a foot-racing handicap, run just after Christmas at Sheffield, and how I came to win happened in this wise. At eighteen I found myself still living, say, at Stockton-on-Tees, on the borders of Yorkshire, the town of my birth. My trade was that of a wood-turner, and with but half my time served. 'Old Tubby' found me an unwilling apprentice, who had not the least inclination for work. Stockton, though only a little place, is noted for sporting and games of all sorts—but particularly for cricket. I played, of course, but they didn't 'reckon' much of me, except for fielding. 'Sikey,' who was a moulder, and I, kept ferrets and dogs, too, and on Sundays we used to go up the 'Tees-side' after rabbits, or rats, or anything we could get. Sometimes we stripped and had a 'duck,' and then we ran on the bank barefoot. I could give him half a score yards start in a field's length, and win easily; but often I didn't try to get up till close upon the hedge we had agreed should be the winning-post. My father had been coachman to a sporting gent who kept race-horses, and the old man used to talk for everlasting about the 'Chifney rush.' When first Sikey and I ran I tried to beat him, so he made me give a start. Then I thought of the 'cute old jockey, and I used to try and get up and win in the last yard or so.

One day Locker, who had formerly kept a running-ground at Staleybridge, met me, and asked if I'd go out with him next Saturday and have a spin. I told him I 'didn't mind;' so we went up the turnpike till a straight

level bit was found, and he stepped 100 yards, leaving me at the start, saying, 'Come away as hard as thou can, whenever thou art ready.' He had his hands in his top-coat pocket all the while, and when I finished, we walked on a bit, neither speaking for a quarter of a mile further, when he looked at his watch and said it was 'getting dinner-time.' Soon after he looked again, and then 'took stock o' me from head to foot,' and as we passed the ground I had run over, he asked, 'Canst run another hundred?' I told him I could; but this time he pulled off his own coat, and said, 'We'll go together.' He was quickest off, but I could have passed him any time, just as I used to pass Sikey. When we got nearly to the finish I 'put it on' and just got home first. He seemed pleased and told me not to say a word to anybody, but come down and meet him again. I didn't know what he was about at all, but I said 'All right,' and next Saturday went to the same place. Locker was there, and two other coves with him, as I hadn't seen before. One was a tall thin un he called 'Lanky,' and the other was little and wiry, and rather pock-pitted. He said, 'Let's all four run for a "bob" apiece, and you three give me two yards start?' But they wouldn't; so he said, I should run the 'long un' for a crown. That was soon settled, and just before we started, Locker whispered to me, 'Beat him, lad, if thou canst; I want him licked, he is such a bragger. We'll share t' crown if thou wins.' The little un set us off, and Locker was judge. Well, we got away together, and I headed him in by five yards easy. Locker fairly danced, he was so pleased; and though Lanky grumbled a bit at first to part with his 'crown,' he was soon all right. We went to Locker's to dinner, and talked about 'sprinting,' as they called it, all the afternoon. I told 'em I'd never run at all before except for fun, and they seemed 'fairly staggered.' They asked if I would run a match for 5*l.* next week, and I told 'em I didn't mind. Locker

said I was a 'good un,' and I might 'win 100*l.* if I'd nobbut stick tu him.' Well, we agreed that I was to do just as he directed, and receive a sovereign for myself if I won by just a foot, and two pound if I ran a dead heat, letting the 'novice' who was to be my opponent catch me at the finish. I never 'split' to anybody except Sikey, and he went to see the race. Over a hundred people were there, and off we started. Everybody thought I was winning, but I 'shammed tired,' and he beat me about three inches, the judge said. Locker swore it was a dead heat, and as he had laid 2 to 1 on me I thought he'd lost a lot of money. As we went home, he said, 'There's 2*l.* for thee, lad; thou did it wonderful well; I shall match thee again next Saturday for 20*l.*: we might as well have it as anybody else.' Well, during the week I was out with him every night, and he said, 'Stick to me, and we'll mak these coves sit up. Thou'rt a thunderin' good un, and we'll gan to Sheffield together in less nor six months if thou can keep thysel to thysel.' Of course I was pleased, and I bought a new pair of running-shoes with spikes in. He showed me *Bell's Life* next week, with a challenge in that '"Locker's lad," not satisfied with his late defeat, will take a yard in 100 from the "Stockton Novice," for 25*l.* or 50*l.* aside. A deposit to the editor, and articles sent to Mr. Locker's running-grounds, Stockton, will meet with immediate attention.' I was quite struck, and said I wondered what 'Old Tubby' would think if he knew. Locker said, 'Go ask him for thy indentures, and if he won't give 'em up, ask him what he'll tak for 'em.' So I did, and if I hadn't been in such a hurry, he'd have thrown 'em at me, and said he was glad to get rid of an idle rascal. As it was, I told him I'd something else to do, and he demanded 3*l.* for my release. Locker gave me the money next day, and I soon put the indentures in the fire; thanking my stars for the escape. After this I lived at Locker's altogether, and in two or three days an answer

came from the 'Novice,' to say he'd give 2 yards start in 150. Well, that didn't seem to suit Locker, so he replied, through the paper again, that 'Sooner than not run again, his lad should run the "Novice" 100 yards level at Kenham grounds for 25*l.* a side. To run in three weeks.' Articles came and were signed on these terms. Then he said, 'Thou needn't train at all, though I want thee to win this time by nearly a yard; just stay a bit longer than before, and don't let him quite catch thee. Make a good race of it, but be sure and win.' We often went to the old spot on the turnpike, and once he took a tape and measured the ground. He had stepped it within a yard and a half. At last he showed me his watch that he had won in a handicap. There was a long hand which jumped four times in a second, and he could start it or stop it by pressing a spring whenever he liked. Then I held it while he ran, and found he was just 11 sec. doing his 100 yards. I tried, and was 'ten and a beat,' which he told me was reckoned first-rate time. While I stopped with him I found out all about 'sprints' and 'quarters,' and how long a man ought to be running different distances. I asked, too, about the last race; why he could afford to give me 2*l.* when I lost? He said the two 'fivers' he had bet were with 'pals,' and he lost nothing but my stake. Then he told me about the little man and Lanky, whom I had met with him and run against. The 'long un,' he said, was a very good 'trial horse,' who could keep his tongue in his head and would 'stand in' if I won anything. The little un had been on business in the north, and came round to see him (Locker). It was all chance his being there, but I should see him again, farther south, where he kept a running-ground. Well, the day for our race came at last, and we went to Kenham. I was wrapped in a blanket after we stripped, and a stout man, called Woldham, who stood referee, whispered something to Locker, who replied that I was fit and sure to win. They laid 5

to 4 against me at first, but presently I heard evens offered, and then 22*l.* to 20*l.*, on me, and that was as far as Locker's friends would go. We had a lot of 'fiddling,' as they call it, at the mark, but presently we jumped away, I with an advantage of about a yard. I had made the gap quite four yards at half the distance, and then 'died away' till near the post, where, as the *Chronicle* next Monday said, I 'struggled manfully, and took the tape first by half a yard; time, 11 sec.' Hadn't we a jaw as we went back! Locker said I was a 'wonderful clever lad,' and that Woldham had told him I should be 'heard of again.' We both laughed, and I got 5*l.* for winning. With this I bought a new rig out, and everybody at Stockton that knew me said I was 'ruined for life.' They all wanted to know where the togs came from, however, but I kept that to myself.

It was now September, and Locker said, 'I'll enter thee for a handicap.' So he did, and shortly we went to Kenham again, where, by his directions, I was beat for my heat, with 5 yards start in 120. About a week later, we had a long talk, and then he said, 'Dost know what I've been doing, lad?' I told him I thought he meant to get me a good start and try if I could win. 'Thou'rt partly right,' he said, 'but I've been running thee 100 yards, and letting thee lose in t' last few strides. This makes 'em think thou can't stay. I know thou'rt as good at 150 as 100, so I shall train thee and run thee at Sheffield this Christmas. If thou can win there, we can earn 1000*l.* between us, and if thou can only run into a place, we shall make 50*l.* or 100*l.* apiece; but mind, we shall let t' cat out o' t' bag: thou'll never get on a mark again after trying once.' Presently, Merling and Stemmerson advertised a 40*l.* handicap at Kenham, and I entered; then came the big Sheffielder of 80*l.*, and down went my name for that too. I lived very reg'lar all this time, went to bed soon, and practised the distance every day, till Locker said I

was a 'level time' man, and if I didn't win it would be a 'fluke.' At last the start appeared: I got in at 7 yards in the 130 at Newcastle, and my mark was 67 in 210 yards at Ryde Park. Locker was delighted: 'Thou can win 'em both in a walk, lad,' he said, again and again. Then the betting quotations were sent up week after week, and I was at 100 to 2 long enough at Sheffield. There wasn't much doing on the 130 yards race, so Locker said I might go there on the Saturday and lose my first heat. He didn't lay out a penny any way till we went into Alf Wilner's, the Punch Bowl, on Sunday night. Somebody presently asked my price, and, to my surprise, up got the little pock-marked man I had met, and said he was commissioned to take 60 to 1 to 5*l.*, just for a 'fancy' bet. A big Sheffielder opened his book and said he might as well have the 'fiver' as not, and there I was backed to win 300*l.* already. Locker and I went away to bed about nine o'clock, and next morning in came the little un at six to tell us he'd ta'en five fifties more, then five forties, ten thirties, and ten twenties, and I was now in the market at 12 to 1 taken and offered. My heat was the sixth, and there were five starters marked. First came 'old Scratch' of Pendleton, at 59 yards, then Roundtree of Huddersfield at 62, and myself at 67; the other didn't turn up. The pistol was fired and away we went, and, as Locker had started me hundreds of times, so that I could 'get off the mark' well, I don't think I lost any ground. At about half way I could hear somebody on my left, but I daren't look round. Afterwards I found 'Scratch' had tried to 'cut me down,' but it was all no use, and I took away the tape by two yards good. Everybody cheered, for betting on the heat had been 7 to 4 on 'Scratch' and 3 to 2 against me. At the close of the day there were ten runners left in for the final heat, and 'my price' was 4 to 1, Roper, of Staleybridge, being the favourite at 6 to 4 against him. Locker said he had laid off 250*l.* at 5 to 1 directly after

the heat, so that our party stood to win 1000*l.* exactly, of which I was to have 200*l.* if I 'landed.' We were together till bedtime, and slept in a double room. At seven next morning we took a stroll, and just as we got to Alf's to breakfast, somebody put a bit of paper into my hand and then shot away. I slipped it in my pocket, and said 'nowt' till after breakfast, when I read on it, '150*l.* for thyself, before the start, if thou'll run fourth.' I asked Locker what it meant, and he laughed, and said they wanted me to 'rope.' When we went out again the little fellow pulled out a roll of notes and showed 'em to me; but I meant to win if possible, so I shook my head. As the morning passed, I 'sort of funked' the race, but then I thought, 'I were a made man if I copped.' So I just said to mysel, 'Bill, lad, haul in thee slack,' and off we went to the grounds. I never felt fitter either before or since; and after Roper got off badly and was beat a short foot, I was sure the final heat was my own. My second heat was an easy win, and 'Lord, how the Sheffielders did shout' when I ran in three yards ahead without being fully extended! They laid 7 to 4 on me for the deciding race, which was the hardest of the lot. Hooper, of Stanningly, went from the same mark; we afterwards found out they'd played a similar game with him. They'd 'pulled' him for two handicaps, and let him lose all his matches, and now he had been backed to win 600*l.* He beat me at starting, and before we got half way they cried, 'Hooper wins.' I was a good yard behind him, but with a hard strain I got level, and we ran shoulder and shoulder till just on the tape, where I threw myself forward, with the old 'Chifney rush,' and just won by a bare half-yard. Locker fairly hugged me, and half blind though I was with the tough race, the 'tykes' shoulder-heighted and carried me off to the house.

In presents, and with my share, I got 230*l.*, and thought I'd put it away in the bank. But that night we all had

champagne, and I went to bed quite queer and dizzy like. Next day was the same, and on Thursday we took train to Manchester, where I was invited to stop a week or two. Locker left me and went home, telling me to take care of myself. I wish I'd gone too, for what with meeting betting-men, and playing cards and buying swell clothes, to say nothing of dresses for a fresh sweetheart, I soon got awful 'fast.' Then we used to sit up at nights playing 'seven's the main,' and I wasn't lucky or summut; but, however, in six weeks I'd got through half my money. One night we started cutting through the pack, and then played 'Blind Hookey,' and next morning the little pock-pitted man came up and called me a 'flat,' and said I'd fair thrown my winnings into the fire. He didn't know much about what had gone on, and when I told him 'I'd knocked down close on 150*l*.,' he said he daren't send me back to Stockton. Well, I stopped at Manchester altogether; and during the next two or three years I won heaps of races, learned the 'rope trick,' and found out whose 'stable' every lad trained from. I won hundreds of pounds, which having all come over the 'devil's back,' went the same way. I'm twenty-three now, but I can't do 'level time' any longer without six weeks' training, although even yet, at 100 yards, very few lads can 'pull off their shirt' every day in the week and lick me. I like the life very well—it's free and easy; but I wish Locker had ta'en me back and made my matches. He's clever, he is, and knows when to 'let a fellow's head loose' without hallooing.

DICKENS'S DOGS;

OR THE LANDSEER OF FICTION.



ONE of the pleasantest workings of that enlarged philanthropy of our time, whose only embarrassment seems the discovery of sufficient grist—as it may be called—for its labour, has happily taken the shape of an enlarged sympathy for an oppressed and long-suffering class of fellow-creatures: the odious intoleration of centuries has been at last happily swept away, and the dog no longer skulks in caves and deserts, the Pariah and Cagot of a civilised community. The days of his persecutions have gone by. A price is no longer set upon his head; neither

is he compelled to practise the rites of his peculiar worship —whatever that may be—in the perilous secrecy of the blind alley and the lonely *cul de sac.* Nor is he any longer cast out into the Coliseum a canine martyr—butchered, as it were, to make a Saxon holiday. His is not now a proscribed tribe—the Israelite caste of the animal world—driven into the kennel ghetto—spat upon—pelted with mud and stones by youthful Arabs of the streets, who are yet Christians and believers. They do not skulk along timorously, with averted eyes and slavish gait, grateful for the withheld kick, or the stone unlaunched, or even for the poor gift of life, which any believer had the privilege of taking from them. The grand day of their redemption has come about. Liberal men of large hearts have agitated that the blessings of a free constitution might be extended to them. The grand boon of emancipation had been conceded to the slave and to the Catholic. It was iniquitous that the dog should rest under disabilities. The vile penal laws which had so long disgraced the statute-book should be abrogated. His chains were struck off (morally speaking, for it was felt that some little restraint in this shape, under judicious restrictions, was still necessary). He could hold and enjoy freehold estates and dwelling-house without interruption or disturbance. He could enter upon any of the learned professions open to his race, and rise, if he had gifts sufficient, to the highest distinctions in the hunting-field or the preserve. If he elected to pursue the stage as a profession, and exhibited talents of a high dramatic order, his histrionic efforts were welcomed with the flattering plaudits of an appreciative audience. Nay, the legislature has busied itself with his political *status*, and passed successive Acts of Parliament, which have received the royal assent, which punish severely all outrages against his person. The newer and healthier tone of society, in his regard, encourages him to raise himself from a debased condition

not of his own making; to let the schoolmaster go abroad in his ranks; to develop intelligence; to subject themselves to moral and decent restraints; to check those bursts of agrarian violence and outrage—that species of rude Whiteboyism, as it were—for which the barbarian code of society was in itself only too responsible—to cultivate, in short, the virtues of health, strength, and washing. These things have the new philanthropists and the friends of the dog preached and preached effectively.

This new charity, which takes creatures of all denominations within its pale, and which knows no distinction of paw, or limb, or skin, or hairy coat, has already been attended with prodigious fruit. It has resulted not in a bald grudging toleration, but in an eager welcome and generous enthusiasm. Already it can be gathered even from their eyes and bearing that they feel, and are proudly conscious of their enfranchisement. There is a bold independent port, almost manly, and even a splendid arrogance, nearly justifiable. They take the wall in the streets. They look down placidly from flying chariots. The more effeminate are dressed with particoloured ribbons, repose on cushions, and accept with a fashionable indifference the eager caresses of ladies of fashion. There is a special police charged with their protection. But far more effectual than any police, repentant public opinion watches over them jealously. And though, indeed, it hath been insinuated that much of this consideration is to be placed to the account of mere outside and more perishable gifts of form and feature, without regard to that interior worth with which the mind makes the body rich, still Fashion fluctuates so impartially, and veers so steadily from one species to the other, that she contrives, by varying whim or fancy, to bring all within the circle of her favours. Hence the ugly and ill-favoured are sure to be esteemed for their blemishes, as are the beautiful for their perfection.

In this paradise there is room for the sleek because they are sleek; for the rough and unkempt precisely because they are rough and unkempt. There may be seen, too, loose outcasts upon the streets—pauper creatures, who, without protest on the part of the humane and those who can feel, are treated with reproach and contumely. But these, it is well understood, are the pauper spendthrifts, the rakes and *mauvais sujets* of their order, who have taken to evil courses and spent their all, and who are now eking out a precarious livelihood by shifty ways and dishonest tricks—specially in the neighbourhood of butchers' stalls, where police are inefficient—having forfeited that fair esteem and protection to which a righteous course of life would have entitled them. And as an instance of the way in which correct public opinion sets itself in protest against such conduct, mark how the respectable tax-paying citizen dog, hurrying down to business with his master—the well-fed, well-clad, canine industrious apprentice—mark with what reprobation he hunts, utterly routs, the trembling cowering outcast and disreputable vagrant. And yet he is wholly justified in such conduct; for is not that other a pure canine scamp, whom no dog of station could decently know, and who has brought discredit on the cloth?

Much of this altered tone and liberal toleration is, no doubt, owing to a happy change in the feeling of society. That the old, low, canine bigotry is out of fashion, and a more enlightened sentiment has come in its place, must be, no doubt, set to the account of what is called the spirit of the age. But for the thorough propagation and wholesale popularisation of these views, their extension through the villa districts, in short, for the preaching of the new evangel through the length and breadth of the land, two persons—two incomparable artists each in his own walk—are more directly responsible. To Mr. Charles Dickens and Sir Edwin Landseer a grateful canine posterity, if ever it should reach to the necessary develop-

ment, shall set up the bronze statue or commemorative pillar! It must be recollected that it was Lillibulero that whistled King James out of his three kingdoms.

The painter has pleaded by his canvas and his multiplied engravings, the writer by a broad flood of stories, poured out over the face of the land. The one preaches from the wall; the other, with a far greater command of eye and heart, from a pulpit by the fireside. The painter, with all his wonderful skill, sets his animals in attitudes —gives but canine *poses plastiques*—the quick eye and intelligent look; he manipulates the hair and skin with a touch infinitely marvellous. He does the most that his tools will let him do, and more than could be credited was within the function of those instruments.

Yet with the novelist, the author of the Thousand and One English Nights' Entertainment, is a far greater power and an infinitely broader variety. For he takes the newly-enfranchised animal within the charmed circle of his characters, sets him down at the fireside and chimney-corner, and furnishes him with quaint reflections of the whims and humours of humanity, playing on them with delicate touches which seem almost earnest, until they really mount to the dignity of a character. The four-footed actors play their little parts, and in a pleasant complimentary manner become as essential to the piece as the more leading human men and women. By some mystery the grand magician is assumed to have special knowledge of the interior working of the motives and emotions of the tribe, and by a pleasant fiction reproduces the whole interior idiosyncrasy with a delightful authority which no one seems prepared to question. By this exquisite art we are introduced without surprise to dogs of pleasant humours and agreeable oddities, and without astonishment meet Pumblechooks and Mark Tapleys in the ranks of the tribe. They have speaking eccentricities in their wiry hair, droll twists in their whiskers, a know-

ing expression about the tail, and habitual oddities of manner, just like the grander bipeds.

It is curious, certainly, that fuller attention has not been drawn to this power of our great story-teller—a power significant of a profound study, and a yet more exquisite appreciation of the ways and manners, of the delicate lights and shadows, of animal character—greater than the cold pedantries of Buffon or Cuvier could help them to. It is worth dwelling a little on this famous gallery of animal sketches, and showing by a short meditation on these creations of the novelist what an acute, and at the same time genial and enthusiastic, student he has been. That, out of pen-and-ink uniform, he is a kind patron to animals, is clear. Indeed, we have been told as much in those new prefaces to his novels, which are sometimes as entertaining, if not quite so lengthy, as those prefixed to the Waverley series. He there writes the history of two ravens, and shows us how they sat for famous Grip. Now we shall never be let into the secret of the originals from which his sporting-dog portraits were drawn.

Room first of all for a dog of the very lowest extraction, utterly unknown to the canine blue books, without pedigree or breed, the disreputable property of that disreputable housebreaker and noted ticket-of-leave man Mr. William Sikes, a brutal master of a faithful, uncomplaining, patient, much-enduring animal, who is yet of reserved habits, and of intellectuals not very highly developed. Bull's Eye is this creature's name. He has been reared in the worst company—or rather has reared himself—in a desperate shifty way. Nor is it surprising that his normal gait should be a suspicious skulking progress along the public ways, or that he should settle it down that the invariable salutation of his tribe by the great human race was a stick or a stone.

Here is Bull's Eye making his bow:

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'A white shaggy dog, with his face scratched and torn in twenty different places, skulked into the room. "Why didn't you come in afore?" said the man; "you're getting too proud to own me afore company, are you?" This command was accompanied by a kick which sent the animal to the other end of the room. He appeared well



BULL'S EYE.

used to it, however, for he coiled himself up in a corner very quietly, without uttering a sound, and winking his very ill-looking eyes about twenty times in a minute, appears to occupy himself in taking a survey of the apartment.'

Mr. William Sikes has an appointment presently at a

low public-house in the filthiest part of Saffron Hill. Here Bull's Eye makes his second appearance. 'A white-coated, red-eyed dog, who occupied himself alternately in winking at his master with both eyes at the same time, and in licking a large fresh cut on one side of his mouth, which appeared to be the result of some recent conflict.'

'"Keep quiet, you warmint; keep quiet,"' said Mr. Sikes, suddenly breaking silence. Whether his meditations were so intense as to be disturbed by the dog's winking, or whether his feelings were so wrought upon by his reflections that they required all the relief derivable from kicking an unoffending animal to allay them, is matter for argument and consideration. Whatever was the cause, the effect was a kick and a curse bestowed upon the dog simultaneously.

'Dogs are not generally apt to revenge injuries inflicted on them by their masters; but Mr. Sikes' dog having faults of temper in common with his owner, and labouring, perhaps, at that moment under a powerful sense of injury, made no more ado, but at once fixed his teeth in one of the half-boots, and having given it a good hearty shake, retired, growling, under a form, thereby just escaping the pewter measure which Mr. Sikes levelled at his head.

'"You would, would you?" said Mr. Sikes, seizing the poker in one hand, and deliberately opening with the other a large clasp-knife, which he drew from his pocket. "Come here, you born devil! Come here! D'ye hear?"

'The dog, no doubt, heard, because Mr. Sikes spoke in the very harshest key of a very harsh voice; but appearing to entertain some unaccountable objection to having his throat cut, he remained where he was.' Then follows an unseemly contest. 'The dog jumped from right to left, and from left to right, snapping, growling, and barking: the man thrust, and swore, and struck, and blasphemed; and the struggle was reaching a most critical point for one or other, when, the door suddenly opening,

the dog darted out, leaving Bill Sikes with the poker and the clasp-knife in his hands.'

In his indignation at this interruption of purpose the gentle housebreaker gives utterance to some pleasant satire on the watchful providence exercised by his country over the well-being of animals.

'"I wish you had been the dog, Fagin, half a minute ago."

'"Why?" inquired the Jew, with a forced smile.

'"'Cause Government, as cares for the lives of such men as you, as haven't half the pluck of a cur, lets a man kill his dog as how he likes," replied Sikes, shutting up his knife, with a very expressive look. "That's why."'

Still the poor quadruped keeps faithful to his master, bearing no malice; for suffering is the badge of all his tribe. At the breaking up of that meeting the two principal actors departed together, 'followed at a little distance by the dog, who slunk out of a back yard as soon as his master was out of sight.'

The details of poor Oliver's recapture on the open highway are familiar to all readers, in which nefarious proceeding it cannot be concealed that Bull's Eye played a considerable part. When Mr. Sikes burst out of the beer-shop there was a 'white dog at his heels,' in nowise slack to second his master's views. '"Here, Bull's Eye," said he. The dog looked up and growled. "See here, boy," said Sikes, putting his other hand to Oliver's throat, and uttering a savage oath, "if he speaks ever so soft a word, hold him! D'ye mind?" The dog growled again, and, licking his lips, eyed Oliver as if he were anxious to attach himself to his windpipe without any unnecessary delay. "He's as willing as a Christian, strike me blind if he isn't," said Sikes, regarding the animal with a kind of grim and ferocious approval. "Get on, young un." Bull's Eye wagged his tail in acknowledgment of this unusually endearing form of speech, and giving vent to another

admonitory growl for the benefit of Oliver, led the way onward.'

Later on, among a select company composed of Messrs. Dawkins, Charles Bates, and other gentlemen of the same profession, playful allusion is made to their honourable calling, of which Mr. Dawkins (better known as the Dodger) insists that Bull's Eye is an influential member. '"He is the downiest one of the lot." "And the least given to peaching," added Charley Bates. "He wouldn't so much as bark in a witness-box—no, not if you tied him up in one, and left him there without wittles for a fortnight," said the Dodger. "He's a rum dog. Don't he look fierce at any strange cove that laughs or sings when he's in company?" pursued the Dodger, "Won't he growl at all when he hears a fiddle playing; and don't he hate other dogs as ain't of his breed—oh, no!"

'"He's an out-and-out Christian," said Charley. This was merely intended as a tribute to the animal's abilities, but it was an appropriate remark in another sense if Master Bates had only known it; for there are a great many ladies and gentlemen claiming to be out-and-out Christians between whom and Mr. Sikes's dog there exist very strong and singular points of resemblance.'

Bull's Eye does not reappear again until late in the drama, when he is seen sitting by his master's bed on guard, as it were, 'eyeing him with a wistful look, and now pricking up his ears and uttering a low growl as some noise in the street attracted his attention.'

Presently enters the pleasant fraternity lately mentioned, on a visit of comfort to the indisposed burglar, bearing with them several good things in the shape of pies and strong drink.

'"Drive him down, Charley," Mr. Sikes said, alluding to Bull's Eye, who was doubtless rendered troublesome by the sight of the cheer.

'"I never see such a jolly dog as that," cried Master

Bates, doing as he was desired, "smelling the grub like an old lady agoing to market! He'd make his fortun' on the stage, that dog would, and rewive the drayma besides."'

But, returning again to Bull's Eye, the fortunes of his master and his own have grown to be overcast, and wicked Mr. Sikes is led into commission of that murder which, but for an accident, would have subjected him to the penalty of death at the hands of the common executioner. In spite, however, of kicks, blows, curses, and every degradation, his faithful dog keeps with him—with, indeed, an inconvenient fidelity; for, having done his work, he has to go forth on that wandering journey of his, which reads like a horrid nightmare, 'dragging the dog with him lest he should carry out new evidences of the crime into the streets.' Then, after that awful night's walk, the scenes in the lonely public-houses, and at the village conflagration, he resolves to go back to London, and to destroy his dog, for fear of detection. He resolved to drown him, 'and walked on looking for a pond, picking up a heavy stone and tying it to his handkerchief as he went. The animal looked up into his master's face while these preparations were making, and, whether his instinct apprehended something of this purpose as the robber's sidelong look at him was steadier than ordinary, skulked a little further in the rear than usual, and cowered as he came more slowly along. When his master halted at the brink of a pool, and looked round to call him, he stopped outright.

'"Do you hear me call? come here," cries Sikes, whistling. The animal came from the very force of habit, but as Sikes stooped to attach the handkerchief to his throat he uttered a low growl and started back. "Come back," said the robber, stamping on the ground. The dog wagged his tail, but moved not. Here Sikes made a running noose, and called him again. The dog advanced,

retreated, paused an instant, turned, and scoured away at his hardest speed. The man whistled again and again, and sat down, and waited in the expectation that he would return. But no dog appeared, and he resumed his journey.'

But the end is at hand. Mr. Sikes is hunted down, and in that exciting scene where he is all but captured, is hanged in a noose of his own make. 'A dog, which had lain concealed till now, ran backwards and forwards on the parapet with a dismal howl, and, collecting himself for a spring, jumped for the dead man's shoulders. Missing his aim he fell into the ditch, turning completely over as he went, and striking his head against a stone, dashed out his brains.'

It will be observed with what art Mr. Dickens has managed, by means of this faithful creature, to inspire an interest in the fortunes of his otherwise repulsive master. And thus the reader is led into the agreeable delusion that there must be still some kind spot in that hardened heart which could inspire such faithfulness. Mr. Dickens has worked this dog-portrait skilfully, and with touches that show he observed their habits long and closely, of which that 'running backwards and forwards on the parapet' before his spring, and that blinking with both eyes with chin on the ground, are famous instances.

Now, while the snow is deep upon the ground, and it is rough and rasping weather outside, and there are light and warmth inside; while the fire has been swept up, and kettle and cricket are singing matches against each other; while, in short, the sweetest little woman that ever lived and moved inside of a book is waiting for somebody's return, there comes of a sudden the sound of crunching wheels, and bells most musical, and the lumbering creak of an overcharged wagon; and that with the voice of a man, the sudden and mysterious appearance of a baby,

and the tearing in and out of an excited dog, there was soon the what's-his-name to pay — which is the first appearance of famous Boxer. Exquisite indeed is every stroke of this sweet Christmas picture. The world could not afford to part with a single figure, or quaint bit of furniture, or cranny, or projecting nob. The withdrawal of the old clock and the unwearied mower would leave a chasm; but the absence of Boxer, who does chorus after



BOXER.

the Greek fashion, would be loss irreparable. What would that little domestic circle, now busy at the fire, and thinking of supper, be without him?

'Boxer, feeling that his attentions were due to the family in general, and must be impartially distributed, dashed in and out with bewildering inconstancy; now describing a circle of short barks round the horse, where he was being rubbed down at the stable-door; now feigning to make savage rushes at his mistress, and facetiously bringing himself to sudden stops; now eliciting a shriek

from Tilly Slowboy in the low nursing-chair near the fire by the unexpected application of his moist nose to her countenance; now exhibiting an obtrusive interest in the baby; now going round and round upon the hearth, and lying down as if he had established himself for the night; now getting up and taking that nothing of a fag-end of a tail of his out into the weather as *if he had just remembered an appointment, and was off to keep it.*'

What an unapproachable stroke this last! Presently the disguised old gentleman, who has been asleep in the cart, is brought in, but under surveillance of Boxer; 'for that good dog, more thoughtful than his master, had, it seemed, been watching the old gentleman in his sleep lest he should walk off with a few young poplar trees that were tied up behind the cart; and he still attended on him very closely, worrying his gaiters in fact, and making dead sets at his buttons.'

What geniality in every line is here, and thorough appreciation of that humour which in truth lurks in dogs' habits and movements, and which hitherto no one has thought of translating to the world! Then comes the famous journey to the picnic, and Boxer is of the party. 'Everybody knew him all along the road, especially the fowls and pigs, who, when they saw him approaching with his body all on one side, and his ears pricked up inquisitively, and that knob of a tail making the most of itself in the air, immediately withdrew into remote back settlements, without waiting for the honour of a nearer acquaintance. He had business everywhere, going down all the turnings, looking into all the wells, bolting in and out of all the cottages, dashing into the midst of all the dame schools, fluttering all the pigeons, magnifying the tails of all the cats, and trotting into the public-houses like a regular customer.'

Then he meets with the blind girl, and makes 'certain delicate distinctions of his own in his communications

with her, which persuaded me fully that he knew her. He never sought to attract her attention by looking at her, as he often did with other people, but touched her invariably. What experience he could ever have had of blind people, or of blind dogs, I don't know. He had never lived with a blind master; nor had Mr. Boxer the elder, nor Mrs. Boxer, nor any of his respectable family on either side, ever been visited with blindness that I am aware of.'

That long weary night for John Peerybingle follows. The mystery is then cleared up; the wrong made right; and the story closes riotously and in a tumult of happiness. Where was Boxer, though? 'There wanted but one living creature to make the party complete; and in the twinkling of an eye there he was; very thirsty with hard running, and engaged in hopeless endeavours to squeeze his head into a narrow pitcher. He had gone with the cart to its journey's end, very much disgusted with his master's absence, and stupendously rebellious to the deputy. After lingering about the stable for some little time, vainly attempting to incite the old horse to the mutinous act of returning on his own account, he had walked into the tap-room and laid himself down before the fire. But suddenly yielding to the conviction that the deputy was a humbug, and must be abandoned, he had got up again, turned tail, and come home.'

That is our last glimpse of famous Boxer. Sir Edwin, with skilful pencil, has shown us what he was like; but has made him a little too wicked and ferocious of aspect. Boxer was not a savage mastiff, but a smart, rough, brisk terrier, with a lively sense of the humorous bound up in his nature.

Room now for a dog of another order, one bred in drawing-rooms, and that figures briefly in a sort of short dream, in the life of one David Copperfield. He is but a

spectral creature, and passes away along with that delicate fairy image of Doady Dora. That tiny abstraction flits by too swiftly, and in its shadow is seen the dim outline of Jip, the King Charles's dog, whose nature it is not to fancy strangers exceedingly. For Mr. Copperfield, on his first introduction to Dora, 'approached him tenderly, for I loved even him; but he showed his whole set of teeth, got under a chair expressly to snarl, and wouldn't hear of the least familiarity.' They walk together in the garden, Dora and Mr. Copperfield. 'He was mortally jealous of me, and persisted in barking at me. She took him up in her arms—oh, my goodness!—and caressed him, but he insisted upon barking still. He wouldn't let me touch him when I tried, and then she beat him. It increased my sufferings greatly to see the pats she gave him for punishment on the bridge of his blunt nose, while he winked his eyes, and licked her hand, and still growled within himself like a little double bass.' The poor youth is nearly driven distracted by the tenderness with which the little quadruped is treated. 'Jip can protect me a great deal better than Miss Murdstone; can't you, Jip?' He only winked lazily, when she kissed his ball of a head. 'We find out our own friends,' continues my Dora, 'instead of having them found out for us; don't we Jip?' Jip made a comfortable noise in answer, a little like a tea-kettle when it sings.

In the course of a later visit in this pretty history, Copperfield brings flowers as a present. 'Dora held my flowers to Jip to smell. Then Jip growled, and wouldn't smell them. Then Dora laughed, and held them a little closer to Jip to make him. Then Jip laid hold of a bit of geranium with his teeth, and worried imaginary cats in it.' He comes again, to break that news of his being a beggar, so comically taken by little Dora: 'whose only association with the word was a yellow face and a night-cap, or a wooden leg, or a dog with a decanter stand in

his mouth.' Jip has to be kissed, 'which operation she insisted should be performed symmetrically, on the centre of his nose.' Under the new economy he was still to 'have his mutton chop with his accustomed regularity.' The evening ends with her 'making Jip stand on his hind legs for toast, when she pretended to hold that nose of his against the hot teapot for punishment, because he wouldn't.' But through Jip's innocent agency all is discovered, Miss Murdstone capturing the letter. 'The little dog,' says that lady, 'retreated under the sofa, and was with great difficulty dislodged by the fire-irons. Even when dislodged, he still kept the letter in his mouth; and on my endeavouring to take it from him, at the imminent risk of being bitten, he kept it between his teeth so pertinaciously as to suffer himself to be suspended in the air by means of the document.' Jip is subsequently stolen, it is suspected 'by the man with the blue bag, and legs like balustrades of a bridge,' but is happily recovered, and found in a 'little house, tied up to a leg of the table.'

At a subsequent interview with those awful ladies, Miss Lavinia and Miss Clarissa, when proper regulations for the meeting of the young lovers were arranged, sounds are heard as of Jip barking in the distance, and 'of being instantly choked.' At the close of which interview, 'I found my blessed darling stopping her ears against the door, and Jip in the plate-warmer, with his head tied up in a towel.' Then she showed me Jip's new 'trick of standing on his hind legs in a corner, which he did for about the space of a flash of lightning, and then fell down.'

Then comes that suggestion of the Cookery Book, which is put to no other use than for Jip to beg on. Then comes that marriage (performed in that comical church of Phiz's own building), when Jip had wedding cake, and it did not agree with him. Then follows that

exquisite detail of housekeeping troubles and miscarriages, with that hopeless trying of little Doady to be industrious, and bringing forth of the account-book, over the items in which 'Jip would walk, wagging his tail, and smear them all out.' Then 'she would call Jip up to look at his misdeeds, which would occasion a diversion in Jip's favour, and some inking of his nose, perhaps, as a penalty. Then she would tell Jip to lie down on the table instantly, like a lion, which was one of his tricks, though I cannot say the likeness was striking, and if he were in an obedient humour, he would obey.'

Presently draws on that dark evening, which shall close over this little episode of the child-wife—foreshadowed dimly by the growing weakness of Jip.

He grows old—at which she wonders exceedingly; leaning out of her couch to look at him: 'He responded by standing on his hind legs, and baulking himself in various asthmatic attempts to scramble up by the head and shoulders.' 'Dora made him lie down by her, and when he was quiet drew one of his long ears through and through her hand, repeating thoughtfully, "Even little Jip! Oh, poor fellow!"'

Then the end approaches, and the little image begins to fade out. Little Doady can walk about no more. 'He is, as it were suddenly, grown very old. It may be that he misses his mistress—something that enlivened him, and made him younger; but he mopes, and his sight is weak, and his limbs are feeble, and my aunt is sorry that he objects to her no more; but creeps nearer as he lies on Dora's bed, and mildly licks her hand.'

In a few minutes more it has grown to be quite dark. And, first, Jip passes away. 'His Chinese house is by the fire; and he lies within it on his bed of flannel, querulously trying to sleep.'

The night wears on; 'more restless than he was, he crawls out of his house, and looks at me, and wanders to

the door, and whines to go up-stairs. "Not to-night, Jip; not to-night." He comes very slowly back to me, licks my hand, and lifts his dim eyes to my face. "O Jip! it may be, never again!" He lies down at my feet, stretches himself out as if to sleep, and with a plaintive cry is dead.'

The exquisite working of these pictures, and the truth and pathos that lie in every line, prove, not indeed the master in his art, for that has been proved over and over again, but the marvellous fidelity and accuracy of his observation.

With the yellow lights hanging overhead, in extemporised hoops, and ravished village throngs, contemplating those fairy scenes in the circle, which include specially the daring equestrian Act on a barebacked steed of Mr. E. W. B. Childers; with Mr. Meriman lavishly distributing his exquisite Shakespearian quips and repartees; and the gentleman in the black evening suit, walking round and round on his eternal beat, inspiriting the flagging pace of bare-backed and draperied chargers; makes entry also that famous member of the company—the highly-trained performing dog Merrylegs! He is but a sketch in this cabinet series; being, so to speak, merely hinted at, without coming on distinctly. And yet he lives (and dies); and we know him perfectly. His marks and tokens are unmistakable. He was, likely enough, a French poodle.

Signor Jupe, his master, Sissy tells, 'was angry only one night, and that was not to me, but Merrylegs. Merrylegs (she whispered the awful fact) is his performing dog. Father, soon after Uny came home from performing, told Merrylegs to jump upon the backs of the two chairs, and stand across them, which is one of his tricks. He looked at father, and didn't do it at once. Everything of father's had gone wrong that night, and he didn't please the public at all. Then he beat the dog, and I was frightened, and said, "Father, father! Pray don't hurt the

creature who is so fond of you! Oh, Heaven forgive you! father, stop!" and he stopped, and the dog was bloody; and father lay down, crying, on the floor, with the dog in his arms, and the dog licked his face.'

Merrylegs is thenceforth lost sight of, and does not reappear for a long interval—not until the close of the story. Then Mr. Sleary briefly tells his history, prefacing it with some admirable observations on the character of the tribe.

'"I'm bletht if I know what to call it; but I have had dogth find me, thquire, in a way that made me think whether that dog hadn't gone to another dog, and thed, 'You don't happen to know a perthon of the name of Thleary, in the horthe-riding way—thout man—game eye?' and whether that dog mightn't have thed, 'Well, I can't thay I know him mythelf; but I know a dog that I think would be likely to be acquainted with him.' And whether that dog mightn't have thought it over, and thed, 'Thleary, Thleary! O yeth, to be thure! a friend of mine mentioned him to me at one time. I can get you hith addreth.' In conthequenth of my being before the public, and going about, there mutht, you thee, there mutht be a number of dogth acquainted with me, thquire, that I don't know. . . . Any way, ith fourteen month ago, thquire, thinthe we wath at Chethter. We wath getting up our *Children in the Wood*, one morning, when there cometh into our ring, by the thtage-door, a dog. He had travelled a long way; he wath in very bad condition; he wath lame and pretty well blind. He went round to our children one after the other, as if he wath theeking for a child he knowd; and then he come to me, and throwd hithelf up behind, and thood on hith two forelegs weak ath he wath; and then he wagged hith tail, and died. Thquire, that dog wath Merrylegth."'

In the weary pilgrimage of little Nell and her grand-

father, they too come across other wonderful performing dogs—fellows of infinite humour—and who are described with a zest and quaintness infinitely diverting. Steps are heard outside the Jolly Sandboys, just as that most appetising stew, which has been simmering on the fire, is ready for being served; and fresh company enters.

'These were no other than four very dismal dogs, *who came pattering in* one after the other, headed by an old



MERRYLEGS.

bandy dog of particularly mournful aspect, who, stopping when the last of his followers had got as far as the door, erected himself upon his hind legs, and looked round at his companions, who immediately stood upon their hind legs in a grave and melancholy row. Nor was this the only remarkable circumstance about these dogs; for each of them wore a kind of little coat of some gaudy colour, trimmed with tarnished spangles, and one of them had a cap upon his head, tied very carefully under his chin, which had fallen down upon his nose, and completely

obscured one eye; add to this, that the gaudy coats were all wet through and discoloured with rain, and that the wearers were splashed and dirty, and some idea may be formed of the unusual appearance of these new visitors to the Jolly Sandboys.

'Neither Short, nor the landlord, nor Thomas Codlin, however, were the least surprised, merely remarking that these were Jerry's dogs, and that Jerry could not be far behind. So there the dogs stood, patiently winking and gaping, and looking extremely hard at the boiling pot,



THE DISMAL FOUR.

until Jerry himself appeared, when they all dropped down at once, and walked about the room in their natural manner. This posture, it must be confessed, did not much improve their appearance, as their own personal tails and their coat tails—both capital things in their way—did not agree together.'

'This was addressed to the dog with the cap on, who, being a new member of the company, and not quite certain of his duty, kept his unobscured eye anxiously on

his master, and was perpetually starting upon his hind legs when there was no occasion, and falling down again.'

'However, he did nothing of the kind, but instead thereof assisted a stout servant-girl in turning the contents of the caldron into a large tureen; a proceeding which the dogs, proof against various hot splashes which fell upon their noses, watched with terrible eagerness. At length the dish was lifted on the table, and mugs of ale having been previously set round, little Nell ventured to say grace, and supper began.

'At this juncture the poor dogs were standing on their hind legs quite surprisingly; the child, having pity on them, was about to cast some morsels of food to them, before she had tasted it herself, hungry though she was, when their master interposed. "No, my dear, no; not an atom from anybody's hand but mine, if you please. That dog," said Jerry, pointing out the old leader of the troop, and speaking in a terrible voice, "lost a halfpenny to-day. He goes without his supper."

'The unfortunate creature dropped upon his forelegs directly, wagged his tail, and looked imploringly at his master. "You must be more careful, sir," said Jerry, walking coolly to the chair where he had placed the organ, and setting the stop. "Come here! Now, sir, you play away at that, while we have supper, and leave off, if you dare!" The dog immediately began to grind most mournful music. His master having shown him the whip, resumed his seat, and called up the others, who, at his direction, formed in a row, standing upright like a file of soldiers. "Now, gentlemen," said Jerry, looking at them attentively. "The dog whose name's called Cato, The dogs whose names ain't called keep quiet; Carlo!" The lucky individual whose name was called snapped up the morsel thrown towards him, but none of the others moved

a muscle. In this manner they were fed at the discretion of their master. Meanwhile the dog in disgrace ground hard at the organ, sometimes in quick time, sometimes in slow; but never leaving off for an instant. When the knives and forks rattled very much, or any of his fellows got an unusually large piece of fat, he accompanied the music with a short howl; but he immediately checked himself, on his master looking round, and applied himself with increased diligence to the Old Hundredth.'

What playfulness and gentle trifling is here! Should the poor trained poodle have ever got on Mr. Dickens's table, and tumbled the ink-bottle on newly-written pages, for which the world was waiting—just as Sir Isaac Newton's little dog Diamond treated certain precious calculations—we might swear he would take the misfortune as gently as did the great astronomer.

When Hugh, in the story of *Barnaby Rudge*, is led to execution, a hint is given of a dog—no more than a bare hint—which is yet introduced with such art as to raise some sympathy for the wild ruffian who is being brought to execution. A man with a corner in his heart for a poor brute who has been faithful to him is not wholly unredeemed. 'Unless,' said Hugh, glancing hurriedly back, 'unless any person here has a fancy for a dog, and not then unless he means to use him well. There's one belonging to me at the house I came from, and it wouldn't be easy to find a better. *He'll whine at first, but he'll soon get over that.*'

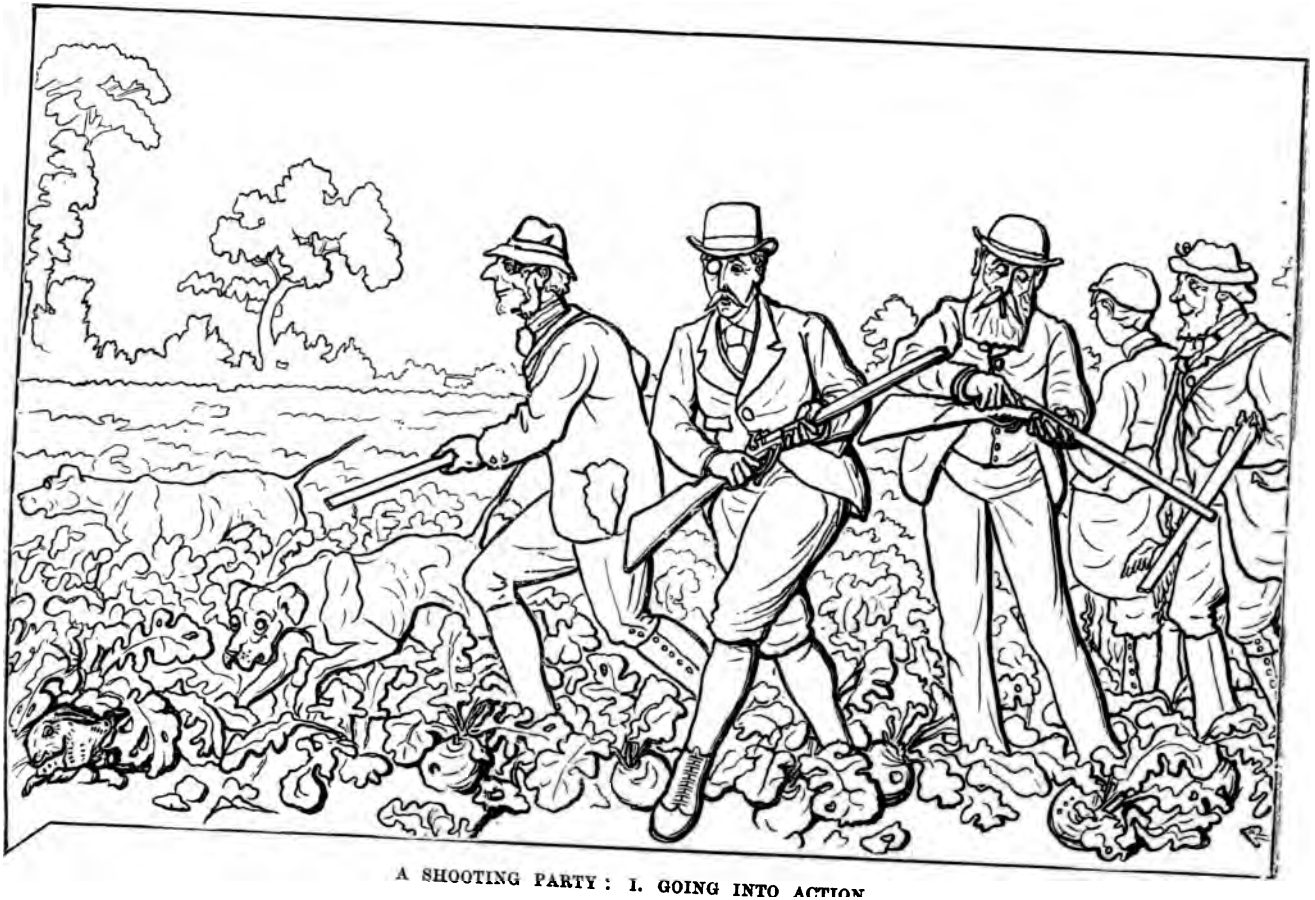
Thus is skilfully suggested the image of some living creature.

With the memory of that child for whom it was said half the empire mourned—was there ever such a compliment paid to novelist?—he has bound up the affection of a dog—'a great, hoarse, shaggy dog, chained up at the back of the house'—whose roughness becomes softened

before the influence of little Paul. Going away after that wonderful party at Dr. Blimber's, and seeing the Toots', and Cornelias, and Feeders, and the whole company of schoolboy faces clustered round him in the hall, he thinks of his four-footed friend. 'Ask them,' he says to the Doctor, 'to take care of Diogenes, if you please.' Diogenes was the dog who had never in his 'life received a friend into his confidence before Paul.'

Then after little Dombey had heard what the wild waves were saying, and drifted away out of the world, came that well-meant visit of condolence to Florence, by the faithful Toots, who brought with him what was really a delicate offering. '"He ain't a lady's dog, you know, but you won't mind that, will you?" In fact, Diogenes was at that moment staring through the window of a hackney cabriolet into which, for conveyance to that spot, he had been ensnared *on a false pretence of rats among the straw*. . . . He gave short yelps out of one side of his mouth, and overbalancing himself by the intensity of every one of those efforts, tumbled down into the straw, and then sprung panting up again, putting out his tongue as if he had come express to a dispensary to be examined for his health.' This, too, was a dog 'continually acting on a wrong idea that there was an enemy in the neighbourhood *whom it was meritorious to bark at*.' Not surprising either, that when he came bouncing into the room that he 'dived under all the furniture, and wound a long iron chain that dangled from his neck round the legs of chairs and tables, and then tugged at it until his eyes became unnaturally visible.'

After this is it wonderful that we should apply the term The Landseer of Fiction to our famous novelist?



A SHOOTING PARTY: I. GOING INTO ACTION



SIMPSON'S SNIPE.

'WHO is Mr. Simpson?' asked my wife, tossing a letter across the breakfast-table. This same little lady opens my correspondence with the *sang-froid* of a private secretary.

'Who is Mr. Simpson?' she repeated. 'If he is as big as his monogram, we shall have to widen all the doors, and raise the ceilings, in order to let him in.'

The monogram referred to resembled a pyrotechnic device. It blazed in all the colours of the rainbow, and twisted itself like the coloured worsted in a young lady's first sampler.

'Simpson,' I replied, in, I must confess, a tremulous sort of way, 'is a very nice fellow, and a capital shot.'

'I perceive that you have asked him to shoot.'

'Only for a day and a night, my dear.'

'Only for a day and a night! And where is Willie to sleep, and where is Blossie to sleep? You know the dear children are in the strangers' rooms for change of air, and really I *must* say it is very thoughtless of you;' and my wife's *nez retroussé* went up at a very acute angle, whilst a general hardness of expression settled itself upon her countenance, like a plaster cast.

I had a bad case. I had been dining with a friend, my friend Captain De Britska. I had taken sherry with my soup, hock with my fish, champagne with my entrée, and a nip of brandy before my claret. What I imbibed after the Lafitte I scarcely remember. Mr. Simpson was of the party, and sat next to me. He forced a succession of cigars into my mouth, and subsequently a mixture of

tobacco, a special thing. (What smoker, by the way, hasn't a special thing in the shape of a mixture? what *gourmet* a special tip as regards salad-dressing?) We spoke of shooting. He asked me if I had any. I replied in the affirmative, expressing a hope that he would at some time or other practically discuss that fact. Somehow I was led into a direct invitation, and this was the outcome. I had committed myself beneath my friend's mahogany, and under the influence of my friend's generous wine. I was in a corner; and now, ye gods! I had to face Mrs. Smithe. There are moments when a man's wife is simply awful. Snugly intrenched behind the unassailable line of defence, duty, and with such 'Woolwich Infants' as her children to hurl against you, which she does in a persistent remorseless way, she is a terror. No man, be he as brave as Leonidas or as cool as Sir Charles Coldstream, is proof against the partner of his bosom when she is on the rampage; and, as I have already observed, Mrs. S. was 'end on.'

'Another change will do the children good, Maria,' I observed.

'Yes, I *sup*pose so. It will do Willie's cold good to sleep in your dressing-room without a fire, won't it? and Blossie can have a bed made up in the bath. Is this Mr. Simpson married or single?'

Hinc illæ lachrymæ. I couldn't say. I never asked him.

'What does it matter?' I commenced, with a view to diplomatising.

'Yes, but it does,' she interposed. 'If he is a respectable married man, which I very much doubt, he must have dear Willie's room.'

'I'm very sorry that I asked him at all, Maria; but as he has been asked, and as I must drive over to meet him in a few minutes, for Heaven's sake make the best of it.'

'Oh, of course; I receive my instructions, and am to

carry them out. All the trouble falls upon me, while you drive off to the station smoking a shilling cigar, when you know that every penny will be wanted to send Willie to Eton.'

I got out of it somehow. Not that Mrs. S. was entirely pacified. She still preserved an armed neutrality; yet even this concession was very much to be coveted. She's a dear good little creature, but she has fiery moods occasionally; and I ask you, my dear sir, is she one whit the worse for it? How often does your good lady fly at *you* during the twenty-four hours? How often! The theme is painful. *Passons.*

My stained-wood trap was brought round by my man-of-all-work, Billy Doyle. Billy is a tight little 'boy,' over whose unusually large skull some fifty summers' suns have passed, scorching away his shock hair, and leaving only a few streaks, which he carefully plasters across his bald pate till they resemble so many cracks upon the bottom of an inverted china bowl. Billy is my factotum. He looks after my horse, dogs, gun, rod, pipes, and clothes, with a view to the reversion of the latter. He was reared, 'man an' boy,' on the estate, and is upon the most familiar yet respectful terms with the whole family. Billy continually lectures me, imparting his opinions upon all matters appertaining to my affairs, as though he were some rich uncle whose will in my favour was safely deposited with the family solicitor.

'We've twenty minutes to meet the train, Billy,' I observed, giving the reins a jerk.

'Is it for to ketch the tin-o'clock thrain from Dublin?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'Begorra, ye've an hour! She's like yourself—she's always late.'

'There's a gentleman coming down to spend the day and shoot,' I said, without noticing Billy's sarcasm.

'Shoot! Arrah, shoot what?'

'Why, snipe, plover—anything that may turn up.'

'Be jabers, he'll have for to poach, thin.'

'What do you mean, Billy?'

'Divvle resave the feather there is betune this an' Ballybann; they're dhruv out av the cunthry.'

'Nonsense, man. We'll get a snipe in Booker's fields.'

'Ye will, av ye sind to Dublin for it.'

I felt rather down in the mouth, for I had during the season given unlimited permission to my surrounding neighbours to blaze away—a privilege which had been used, if not abused, to the utmost limits. Scarce a day passed that we were not under fire, and on several occasions were in a state of siege, in consequence of a succession of raids upon the rookeries adjoining the house.

'We can try Mr. Pringle's woods, Billy.'

'Yez had betther lave *thim* alone, or the coroner 'ill be afther havin' a job. Pringle wud shoot his father sooner nor he'd let a bird be touched.'

'This is very awkward,' I muttered.

'Awkward! sorra a shurer shake in Chrisendom. It's crukkeder nor what happened to ould Major Moriarty beyant at Sievenaculliagh, that me father—may the heavens be his bed this day!—lived wud, man an' boy.'

Billy was full of anecdote, and being anxious to pull my thoughts together, I mechanically requested him to let me hear all about the dilemma in which the gallant Major had found himself.

'Well, sir, th' ould Major was as dacent an ould gintleman as ever swallied a glass o' sperrits, an' there was always lashins an' lavins beyant at the house. If ye wor hungry it was yerself that was for to blame, and if ye wor dhry, it wasn't be raisin av wantin' a *golliogue*. Th' ould leddy herself was aiqual to the Major, an' a hospitabler ould cupple didn't live the Shannon side o'

Connaught. Well, sir, wan mornin' a letther cums, sayin' that some frind was comin for to billet on thim.

"Och, I'm bet!" says the Mrs. Moriarty.

"What's that yer sayin' at all at all?" says th' ould Major; "who bet ye?" says he.

"Shure, here's Sir Timothy Blake, and Misther Bodkin Bushe, an' three more comin'," says she, "an' this is only Wednesday."

"Arrah, what the dickens has that for to say to it?" says the Major.

"There's not as much fresh mate in the house as wud give a brequest to a blackbird," says she; "an' they all ate fish av a Friday, an' how are we for to get it at all at all? An' they'll be wantin' fish an' game."

'Ye see, sir,' said Billy, 'there was little or no roads in thim ould times, an' the carriers only crassed that way wanst a week.

"We're hobbled, shure enough," says the Major, "we're hobbled, mam," says he, "an' I wish they'd had manners to wait to be axed afore they'd come into a man's house," he says.

"Cudn't ye shoot somethin'?" says Mrs. Moriarty.

"Shoot a haystack flyin', mam," says the Major, for he was riz, an' whin he was riz the divvle cudn't hould him; "what is there for to shoot, barrin' a saygull? an' ye might as well be aitin' sawdust."

"I seen three wild-duck below on the pond," she says.

"Ye did on Tib's Eve!" says the Major.

"Och, begorra, it's thruth I'm tellin' ye," says she; "I seen thim this very mornin', when I was comin' from mass —an' be the same token," says she, lukkin' out av the windy, "there they are, rosy an' well."

"Thin upon my conscience, mam," roared the Major, "if I don't hit thim I'll make thim lave that!"

'So he ups an' loads an ould blundherbuss wud all soarts av combusticles, an' down he creeps to the edge av

the wather, and hides hisself in some long grass, for the ducks was heddin' for him. Up they cum; an' the minnit they wor within a cupple av perch he pulls the thrigger as bould as a ram, whin by the hokey smut it hot him a welt in the stummick that levelled him, an' med him feel as if tundher was inside av him rumblin'. He roared millia murdher, for he thought he was kilt; but howsomever he fell soft an' aisy, an' he put out his hand for to see if he was knocked to bits behind, whin, begorra, he felt somethin' soft and warm. "Arrah, what the puck is this?" sez he; an' turnin' round, what was he sittin' on but an illigant Jack hare. "Yer cotch *ma bouchal*," sez he, "an' yer as welkim as the flowers o' May."

'Wasn't that a twist o' luck, sir?' asked Billy, pausing to take breath.

'Not a doubt of it. But what became of the ducks?'

'Troth, thin, ye'll hear. The Major dhropped two av thim wud the combusticles in the blundherbuss, but th' ould mallard kep floatin' on the wather in a quare soart av a way, an' yellin' murdher. When the Major kem nigh him, he seen that he was fastened like to somethin' undher the wather; an' whin he cotch him, what do ye think he found? It's truth I'm tellin' ye, an' no lie: he found the ramrod, that he neglected for to take out o' the gun, run right through th' ould mallard. Half av it was in the mallard, an' be the hole in me coat, th' other half was stuck in a lovely lump av a salmon; and the bould Major cotch thim both. "Now," says he, "come on, Sir Tim an' the whole creel av yez, who's afeard?" An' I'm just thinkin', sir,' added Billy, as we dashed into the railway yard, 'that if ye don't get a slice av luck like Major Moriarty's, yer frind might as well be on the Hill o' Howth.'

The force of Billy's remark riveted itself in my mind, and the idea of asking a man so long a distance to shoot nothing was very little short of insult. Mr. Simpson

arrived as we drove in, arrayed in an Ulster just imported from Inverness. His hat was new; his boots were new; his gloves awfully new, yellow and stiff, and forcing his fingers very far apart, as though his hands were wooden stretchers. His portmanteau, solid leather, was brand new; the very purse from which he extracted a new sixpence to tip the porter was of the same virgin type. He was mistaken for a bridegroom, and the fair bride was eagerly sought for by the expectant porter whilst removing a new rug from the compartment in which Mr. Simpson had been seated. To crown all this newness, his gun-case, solid leather, had never seen the open air till this day, and the iron which impressed upon it Mr. Rigby's brand could scarcely have had time to grow cold.

'Begorra, it's in the waxworks he ought for to be,' muttered Billy Doyle, grimly surveying him from head to foot.

Mr. Simpson's thick moustache possessed a queer sort of curl, his nose too followed this pattern, so that his face somewhat resembled those three legs which are impressed upon a Manx coin. His eyes were long slits, with narrow lids, not unlike a cut in a kid glove: one of these eyes he kept open by means of an eyeglass. This eyeglass was perpetually dropping into his bosom and disappearing, never coming to the surface when required, and only coming up to breathe after a succession of prolonged and abortive dives.

'It's very cold,' he exclaimed, grasping my hand, or rather endeavouring to grasp it, for the new gloves would admit of no loving contact.

'There's likker over beyant at the rifrishmint-bar,' observed Billy, whose invariable habit it was to cut into the conversation with such comments or observations as suggested themselves to him at the moment.

Perceiving an inclination on the part of my guest to profit by the hint, I interposed by informing him that the

refreshment was of the meanest possible character, in addition to its possessing a very inflammatory tendency.

'Thrue for ye, sir. The sperrits is that sthrong that it wud desthroy warts, or burn the paint off av a hall dure.'

'That will do, Billy,' I said, as Simpson's face bore silent tokens of wonder at the garrulity of my retainer. 'We don't require your opinion at present.'

'Och, that's hapes, as Missis Dooley remarked whin she swallird the crab,' said Billy very sulkily, as he mounted behind.

'How is our friend De Britska?' I asked.

'Oh, very well indeed. He quite envied me my trip. He says your shooting is about the best thing in this part of the world.'

'Oh, it's not bad,' I replied, assuming an indifference that I was far from participating in; 'but there are times when I assure—ha, ha! it may appear incredulous, that we cannot stir a single feather.'

'Have you much snipe, Mr. Smithe?'

'Sorra a wan,' replied Billy.

'Your gamekeeper?' asked Simpson, jerking his head in the direction of my retainer.

'My *factotum*. He is one of the family. A regular character, and I trust you will make allowances for him.'

'I love characters. Depend upon it we shall not fall out.'

Simpson chatted very agreeably, and very small. He had read the *Irish Times* during the rail journey, and was master of the situation. Some men take five-shillingsworth out of a penny paper. This was one of them. He had sucked it all in, and the day's news was coming out through the pores of his skin. As a rule such men are to be avoided. The individual who persistently asks you 'What news?' or 'Is there anything new to-day?' is a wooden-headed gossiping bore, who cannot start an idea, and oils the machinery inside his skull with the twopenny-

halfpenny daily currency. Simpson spoke a great deal of the army, quoted the various changes mentioned in that day's *Gazette* with a vigour of memory that was perfectly astounding. Although personally unknown to the countrymen around me, he seemed thoroughly acquainted with their respective pedigrees, their intermarriages, their rent-rolls, and in fact with their most private concerns; so that before we reached our destination I knew considerably more of my neighbours than I, or my father before me, had ever known.

His shooting experiences were of the most extensive and daring character. He had tumbled tigers, stuck pigs, iced white bears, and ostracised ostriches. He had been in the tiger's mouth, on the boar's tusks, and in the arms of the bear. His detailed information on the subject of firearms was worthy of a gunmaker's pet 'prentice.

'I've shot with Greener's patent central-fire choke-bore, and I pronounce it a handy tool. Westley Richards has made some good instruments, and Purdy's performances are crack. I've taken down one of Rigby's with me, as I have some idea of experimentalising; Rigby is a very safe maker. I expect to do some damage to-day, friend Smithe.'

What a laughing-stock I should be, when this man unfolded the tale of his being decoyed into the country by a fellow who bragged about his preserves, upon which there wasn't a feather! Would I make a clean breast of it? would I say that—

Whilst this struggle was waging beneath my waistcoat we arrived, and there was nothing for it but to trust to luck and Billy Doyle.

When we alighted, I asked Simpson into the drawing-room, as his bed-chamber had not yet been allotted to him. My wife was still sulky and did not appear, so I had to discover her whereabouts.

'Simpson has arrived, my dear.'

'I suppose so,' very curtly.

'He is a very agreeable entertaining fellow.'

'I suppose so,' snap.

'Where have you decided on putting him?'

'In your dressing-room.'

'My dressing-room?'

'Yes, your dressing-room. I wouldn't disturb the children for the Prince of Wales.'

Now this was very shabby of my wife. My dressing-room was my *sanctum sanctorum*. There were my papers, letters, pipes, boots, nicknacks, all laid out with a bachelor's care, and each in its own particular place. To erect a bedstead meant an utter disturbance of my effects, which weeks could not repair, especially as regards my papers. I expostulated.

'There is no use in talking,' said my wife; 'the bed is put up.'

Tableau.

Whilst my guest was engaged in washing his hands before luncheon, I held a conference with Billy Doyle with reference to the shooting, our line of country, and the tactics necessary to be pursued.

'Me opinion is that he is a *gommoch*. He doesn't know much. Av he cum down wud an old gun-case that was in the wars, I'd be peckened; but wud sich a ginteel tool ye needn't fret. We'll give him a walk, anyhow. He'll get a bellyful that will heart scald him.'

'But the honour of the country is at stake, Billy. I asked Mr. Simpson to shoot, promising him good sport, and surely *you* are not going to let him return to Dublin to give us a bad name.'

This appeal to Billy's feelings was well timed. He knew every fence and every nest in the barony, and it was with a view to putting things into a proper training that I thus appealed to his better feelings.

Billy scratched his head.

'Begorra, he must have a bird if they're in it; but they're desperate wild, and take no ind of decoyin'.'

Simpson's politeness to my wife was unbounded. He professed himself charmed to have the honour of making her acquaintance, took her in to luncheon with as much tender care as though she had been a cracked bit of very precious china ware; invited her to partake of everything on the table, shoving the dishes under her chin, and advising her as to what to eat, drink, and avoid. He narrated stories of noble families with whom he was upon the most intimate terms, and assured my wife that he was quite startled by her extraordinary likeness to Lady Sarah Macwhirter; which so pleased Mrs. S. that later on she informed me that as Blossie was so much better, she thought it would be more polite to give Mr. Simpson the blue bedroom.

I found this ardent sportsman very much inclined to dally in my lady's boudoir, in preference to taking the field, and encouraged this proclivity, in the ardent hope of escaping the shooting altogether, and thus save the credit of my so-called preserves. But here again I was doomed to disappointment. Mrs. S., who now began to become rather anxious about the domestic arrangements, politely but firmly reminded him of the object of his visit, and insisted upon our departing for the happy hunting-grounds at once. And at length, when very reluctantly he rose from the table, he helped himself to a stiff glass of brandy-and-water, in order, as he stated, to 'steadyhis hand.'

I must confess that I was rather startled when he announced his intention of shooting in his Ulster. The idea of dragging this long-tailed appendage across ditches and over bogs appeared *outré*, especially as the pockets bulged very considerably, as though they were loaded with woollen wraps; but I was silent in the presence of one who had sought his quarry in the jungle, and shoved

my old-fashioned idea back into the fusty lumber-room of my thoughts. Billy Doyle awaited us with the dogs at the stable gate. These faithful animals no sooner perceived me than they set up an unlimited howling of delight; but instead of bounding forward to meet me, as was their wont, they suddenly stopped, as if struck by an invisible hand, and commenced to set at Simpson.

This extraordinary conduct of these dogs—there are no better dogs in Ireland—incensed Billy to fever heat.

'Arrah, what the puck are yez settin' at? Are yez mad or dhrunk? Whoop! gelang ow a that, Feltram! Hush! away wud ye, Birdlime!'

'Take them away; take them away!' cried Simpson very excitedly. 'I don't want them; I never shoot with dogs. Remove them, my man.'

Billy caught Feltram, but Birdlime eluded his grasp; and having released Feltram and captured Birdlime, the former remained at a dead set, whilst the latter struggled with his captor, as though the lives of both depended on the issue.

'May the divvle admire me,' panted Billy, 'but this bangs Banagher. Is there a herrin' stirrin', or anything for to set the dogs this way?—it bates me intirely.'

I naturally turned to my guest, who looked as puzzled as I did myself.

'I have it!' he cried; 'it's the blood of the sperm-whale that's causing this.'

'Arrah, how the blazes cud the blood av all the whales in Ireland make thim shupayriour animals set as if the birds were foreninst them?' demanded Billy, his arms akimbo.

'I will explain,' said Simpson. 'Last autumn I was up whaling off the coast of Greenland. We struck a fine fish; and after playing him for three-and-twenty hours, we got him aboard. Just as we were taking the harpoon out, he made one despairing effort and spurted blood; a

few drops fell upon this coat, just here,' pointing to the inside portion of his right-hand cuff, 'and I pledge you my veracity no dog can withstand it. They invariably point; and I assure you, Smithe, you could get up a drag hunt by simply walking across country in this identical coat, built by John Henry Smalpage.'

This startling and sensational explanation satisfied me. Not so my *factotum*, who gave vent in an undertone to such exclamations as '*Naboclish! Wirra, wirra!* What does he take us for? Whales, begorra!'

The riddance of the dogs was a grand *coup* for me. In the event of having no sport the failure could be easily accounted for, and I should come off with flying colours.

'I make it a point,' observed Simpson, 'to shoot as little with dogs as possible. I like to set my own game, shoot it, and bag it; nor do I care to be followed by troublesome and often impertinent self-opinionated gamekeepers' (Billy was at this moment engaged in incarcerating Feltram and Birdlime). 'These fellows are always spoilt, and never know their position.'

I was nettled at this.

'If you refer to—'

'My dear Smithe, I allude to my friend Lord Mulligatawny's fellows, got up in Lincoln green and impossible gaiters, who insist upon loading for you and all that sort of thing. You know Mulligatawny, of course?'

I rather apologised for not having the honour.

'Then you shall, Smithe. I'll bring you together when you come to town. Leave that to me; a nice little party: Mulligatawny, Sir Percy Whiffler, Colonel Owlfinch, one of the Guards—they're at Beggar's Bush now, I suppose—Belgum, yourself, and myself.'

This was very considerate and flattering; and I heartily hoped that by some fluke or other we might be enabled to make a bag.

When we arrived upon the shooting-ground, I observed that it was time to load; and calling up Billy Doyle with the guns, I proceeded to carry my precept into practice. My weapon was an old-fashioned muzzle-loader, one of Truelock & Harris; and as I went through the process of loading, I could see that Mr. Simpson was regarding my movements with a careful and critical eye.

'I know that you swells despise this sort of thing,' I remarked; 'but I have dropped a good many birds with this gun at pretty long ranges, and have wiped the eyes of many a muzzle-loading party.'

'I—I like that sort of gun,' said Simpson. 'I'd be glad that you'd take this,' presenting his, with both barrels covering me.

'Good heavens, don't do that!' I cried, shoving the muzzle aside.

'What—what—' he cried, whirling round like a teetotum—'what have I done?'

'Nothing as yet; but I hate to have the muzzle of a gun turned towards me since the day I saw poor cousin Jack's brains blown out.'

'What am I to do?' exclaimed Simpson. 'I'll do anything.'

'It's all right,' I replied; 'you won't mind my old-world stupidity.'

My guest's gun was a central-fire muzzle-loader of Rigby's newest type, which he commenced to prepare for action in what seemed to me to be a very bungling sort of way. He dropped it twice, and in releasing the barrels brought them into very violent collision with his head, which caused the waters of anguish to roll silently down his cheeks and on to his pointed moustache. If I had not been aware of his manifold experiences in the shooting line, I could have set him down as a man who had never handled a gun in his life; but knowing his powers and prowess, I ascribed his awkwardness to simple care-

lessness, a carelessness in all probability due to the smallness of the game of which he was now in pursuit. I therefore refrained from taking any notice, and from making any observation until he deliberately proceeded to thrust a patent cartridge into the *muzzle* of the barrel of his central-fire.

'Hold hard, Mr. Simpson; you are surely only jesting.'

'Jesting! How do you mean?'

'Why, using that cartridge in the way you are doing.'

'What other way should I use it?'

'May I again remind you that I am utterly averse to facetiousness where firearms are concerned, and—'

'My dear Smithe, I meant nothing, I assure you. I pledge you my word of honour. Here, load it yourself;' and he handed me the gun.

'There'll be a job for the coroner afore sunset,' growled Billy.

'What do you mean, sir?' exclaimed Simpson rather savagely.

'Mane! There's widdys and lone orphans enough in the counthry, sir—that's what I mane;' and Billy started in advance with the air of a man who had to do or die.

Mr. Simpson was silent for some time, during which he found himself perpetually involved in his gun, which appeared to give him the uttermost uneasiness. First, he held it at arm's length as if it was a bow; then he placed it under his arm, and held on to it with the tenacity of an octopus; after a little he shifted it again, sloping it on his shoulder, ever and anon glancing towards the barrels to ascertain their exact position. He would pause, place the butt against the ground, and survey the surrounding prospect with the scrutinising gaze of the advance patrol of a Uhlan.

'Hush!' he suddenly exclaimed. 'We lost something that time; I heard a bird.'

'Nothin', barrin' a crow,' observed Billy.

'A plover, sir; it was the cry of a plover,' evasively retorted the other.

'Holy Vargin! do ye hear this? A pluvver! Divvle resave the pluvver ever was seen in the barony!'

'Silence, Doyle!' I shouted, finding that my retainer's observations were becoming personal and unpleasant.

'Troth, we'll all be silent enough by an' by.'

We had been walking for about half an hour, when Mr. Simpson suggested that it might be advisable to separate, he taking one direction, I taking the other, but both moving in parallel lines. Having joyfully assented to this proposition, as the careless manner in which he handled his gun was fraught with the direst consequences, I moved into an adjacent bog, leaving my guest to blaze away at what I considered a safe distance. I took Billy with me, both for company and for counsel, as my guest's assumed ignorance of the fundamental principles of shooting had somewhat puzzled me.

'It's a quare bisniss intirely, Masther Jim. He knows no more how to howld a gun nor you do to howld a baby, more betoken ye've two av the finest childre—God be good to thim!—in Europe. I don't like for to say he's coddin' us, wud his tigers an' elephants an' combusticles, but, be me song, it luks very like it. I'd like for to see him shootin', that wud putt an ind to the question.'

At this moment, bang! bang! went the two barrels of my guest's gun. Billy and I ran to the hedge, and, peeping through, perceived Simpson running very fast towards a clump of furze, shouting and gesticulating violently. I jumped across the fence, and was rapidly approaching him, when he waved me back.

'Stop! don't come near me! I'm into them. There are quantities of snipe here.'

'Arrah, what is he talkin' about at all at all?' panted Billy. 'Snipes! Cock him up wud snipes! There ain't a snipe—'

Here Simpson, who had been groping amongst the furze, held up to our astonished gaze *two brace of snipe.*

Billy Doyle seemed completely dumbfounded. 'That bangs anything I ever heerd tell of. Man nor boy ever seen a snipe in that field afore. Begorra, he's handy enough wud the gun, after all.'

I was very much pleased to find that our excursion had borne fruit, and that my vaunted preserves were not utterly barren.

'That's a good beginning, Simpson,' I cried. 'Go ahead; you'll get plenty of birds by and by.'

'I'll shoot at nothing but snipe,' he replied. 'Here, you Billy, come here and load for me.'

'Let's look at the birds, av ye plaze, sir,' said Billy, who began to entertain a feeling akin to respect for a man who could bring down his two brace at a shot. 'I'll be bound they're fat an' cosy, arter the hoighth av fine feedin' on this slob.'

'They're in my bag. By and by,' replied Simpson curtly. 'Now, my man, follow your master, and leave me to myself;' and my guest strode in the opposite direction.

Bang! bang!

'Be the mortial, he's at thim agin. This is shupayriour,' cried my retainer, hurrying towards the place whence the report proceeded.

Simpson again held up *two brace of snipe,* and again plunged them into his bag; nor would he gratify the justifiable longings of our gamekeeper by as much as a peep at them.

'This is capital sport. Why, this place is swarming with snipe,' cried my guest whilst his gun was being reloaded. 'Depend upon it, it's a mistake to take dogs. The birds smell them. I'll try that bit of bog now.'

'Ye'll have to mind yer futtin',' observed Billy. 'It's

crukked an' crass enough in some spots; I'd betther be wid ye.'

'Certainly not,' said my guest. 'I always shoot alone.'

'Och, folly yer own wish, sir; only mind yer futtin'.'

Mr. Simpson disappeared into the hollow in which the bog was situated, and, as before, bang! bang! we heard the report of both barrels.

'Be jabers, I'm bet intirely. Thim snipes must have been dhruv from the say, an' have come here unknownst to any wan. Ay, bawl away! Whishst! be the hokey, he's into the bog!'

A dismal wailing, accompanied by cries for help, arose from out the bog, where we found poor Simpson almost up to his chin, and endeavouring to support himself by his elbows.

'Ugh! ugh! lift me out, for heaven's sake! My new clothes—this coat that I never put on before' (his whaling garment)—'why did I come to this infernal hole? Ugh! ugh!'

We dragged him up, leaving his patent boots and stockings behind him. Billy bore him on his back to the house, where he was stripped and arrayed in evening costume.

From the pockets of his Ulster, which it was found necessary to turn out for drying purposes, Mr. William Doyle extracted no less than *six brace of snipe*. Unfortunately for Mr. Simpson the bill was attached to the leg of one of the birds. They had been purchased at a poulterer's in Dublin.

* * * * *

Mr. Simpson did not remain to dine or to sleep. He pleaded a business engagement which he had completely overlooked, and left by the 4.50 train.

'Av all th' imposthors! and his tigers an' elephants no less, an' bears an' algebras! An' goin' for to cod me into

believin' there was snipes growin' in a clover-field, an' thin never to gi' me a shillin'! Pah! the naygur!' and Billy Doyle's resentment recognised no limits.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that I was *not* invited to meet Lord Mulligatawny, Sir Percy Whiffler, Colonel Owlfinch, and one of the Guards, and that my wife holds Simpson over me whenever I hint at the probability of a visit to the metropolis.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE SEASON, AND ITS RESULTS.

'When at the close of the departing year
Is heard that joyful sound, the huntsman's cheer,
And wily Reynard with the morning air
Scents from afar the foe, and leaves his lair.'



I QUITE agree with the distinguished foreign nobleman who declared, that 'Nothing was too good to go foxing in;' and with the immortal Jorrocks of Handley Cross

notoriety, I exclaim, 'Unting, my beloved readers, is the image of war with only ten per cent of its dangers.'

Ever since I was an unbreeched urchin, and my only steed a rough Shetland pony, across whose bare back my infantine legs could scarcely stride, I have looked forward to a day's hunting with the keenest relish. The preliminary sport of cub-hunting—with its early-dawn meets; bad scent, consequent upon fallen leaves and decayed vegetable matter; riotous young hounds, which can scarcely be brought to hunt upon any terms; timid, nervous young foxes, who hardly dare poke their sharp noses out of covert—only serves to give a greater zest as it were to the opening day. One or two woodland runs, just sufficient to breath the well-trained hunter or take the exuberant spirits (the accompaniments of high feeding and no work) from the young one, after a stripling Reynard, who as yet has no line of country of his own, and hardly dares to venture far from the place of his birth, ending with a killing just to blood the young hounds, only makes the longing for the first day of the season more intense.

Not one of her Majesty's subjects throughout her vast dominions—so vast indeed are they that, as the song tells us, 'the sun never sets on their might'—not one, I say, of her Majesty's lieges looked forward more anxiously than I did to the first day of the hunting season of 18—, for why should I be too explicit about dates, or let all the world know that I am so ancient as to remember anything so long buried in the past? I had just returned to old England with a year's leave from my regiment, then in India. I was possessed of capital health and spirits, was only just six-and-twenty years of age, had five hundred pounds at my banker's, and two as good nags in my stable as ever a man laid his leg across. 'Hunting for ever!' I cried, as I strolled into Seamemup and Basteemwell's, the unrivalled breechesmakers' establishment in the Strand, to order a few pair of those most necessary adjuncts to the

sporting man's toilet previous to leaving town. 'Hunting for ever,' and of all the packs in England, commend me to my old acquaintance, those friends of my boyhood, the Easyallshire Muggers. I am not sure but that, strictly speaking, the term mugger ought only to be applied to those packs of hounds which are used for that peculiar pastime which, to again quote the immortal Jorrocks, 'Is only fit for cripples, and them as keeps donkeys,' viz. harriers. Be that as it may, the pack I now speak of were, though called muggers, *bonâ fide* foxhounds, and as such, only used in the 'doing to death' of that wily animal.

The country which had as it were given birth to this distinguished pack presented to the hunting man very much the same features as do most parts of England. There were the same number of ditches and dingles to be got over somehow, the same gates which would and would not be opened, the same fences, stiles, and heavers to be cleared, the same woodland parts to be hunted, from which it was next to impossible to get a fox away, and to which every one said he would never come again, but for all that no one ever kept his word, for there were just the very same number of sportsmen to be seen at the very next meet held in the district; thus proving that foxhunting, even under difficulties, is still a most fascinating diversion; and there were the same snug-lying gorse coverts, from which a run was sure to be obtained over a flat well-enclosed country, which gave both man and horse as much as ever their united efforts could accomplish, to be there or thereabouts at the finish. Nor were the meets of the Easyallshire Muggers, advertised in *Bell's Life*, dissimilar in any respect to those of other packs of hounds, for there were an equal number of cross roads, turnpike gates, public houses, gibbets, woods, sign-posts, and milestones, as elsewhere. Well, to enjoy a season's sport with this so distinguished hunt was my intention;

and no sooner had I completed the requisite arrangements with regard to my hunting toggery, which a residence of some half-dozen years in India had rendered necessary, than I took up my abode in the little town of Surlyford, at the comfortable hotel rejoicing in the mythological sign of the Silent Woman, a fabulous personage surely, to be classed with Swans with Two Necks, Green Men, and other creatures who never had any existence. The first meet of the Easyallshire Muggers was advertised, so said the county paper, to take place at the fourth milestone on the Surlyford road. Thither I repaired fully equipped in all the splendour of a new pink, immaculate cords, brown-tinted tops, my blue birds'-eye scarf, neatly folded and fastened with a pin bearing a most appropriate device, viz. a real fox's tooth. In my impatience to be up and doing on this our opening day, I arrived at the trysting-place, from whence I was to woo my favourite pastime, some half hour or more before the master and his pack were due. I had, therefore, ample leisure to receive the greetings of my numerous old friends and acquaintances, as they came up from all parts, and in all directions, on all sorts and all sizes of nags, and at all kinds of paces, to the place of meeting. First to arrive on that useful steed yclept 'Shanks's pony,' slouching along, clad in rusty velveteen, baggy brown cord breeches and gaiters, billy-cock, as he termed his wideawake hat, on head, a stout ashen stick, cut from a neighbouring coppice, in hand, and ten to one a quantity of wires in his pockets, was handsome, dark-eyed, good-for-nothing, scampish, dishonest Gipsy Jim—the some time gamekeeper, when he could get any to employ him, but oftener the poaching, drinking, thieving vagabond of the neighbourhood. A broad grin of recognition and a touch of the hat on the part of the Gipsy one, and an exclamation on mine of 'Bless me, Jim! not hanged yet?' placed us once again on the old familiar footing of 'I will tell you all I know about foxes' (and

who could afford better information than one whose habits and disposition partook more of the vermin than the man!), 'providing you give me a shilling to drink your health.' Gipsy Jim and I had hardly interchanged these civilities, when, trotting along on a stout, handsome, six-year old, in capital condition, though, if anything, a little too fat (not a bad fault, however, at the beginning of the season), came farmer Thresher, of Beanstead, a florid, yellow-haired, red-whiskered, jovial, hard-riding, independent agriculturist, who, on the strength of having been at school in years gone by with some of the neighbouring squires, myself amongst the number, called us all freely by our surnames, forgetting to prefix the accustomed Mister, and thus giving great umbrage to some and causing them always to pointedly address him as 'Mr. Thresher.' Our mutual salutations had hardly come to an end when we are joined by half a dozen more sturdy yeomen, able and willing to go, let the pace be ever so severe, and all of them contributing their five pounds yearly to the support of the 'Easyallshire Muggers, spite of wheat, sir, at fourteen shillings a bag.'

Young Boaster next turns up, a swaggering blade from a neighbouring hunt, who is always abusing the Easyallshire hounds, and bragging of his own prowess, which consists of riding extraordinary distances to far-off meets, and doing nothing when he gets there, save telling wonderful and fabulous stories of what he had done last time he was out, and what he intended to do then. He is succeeded by Dr. Bolus, 'the sporting Doctor,' as he is called, who must be making a very handsome fortune in his profession, if his knowledge of medicine is anything like his judgment in horse-flesh, his skill in the pigskin, or his acquaintance with the line of a fox. After Bolus, on a three-legged screw, a wonder to every one how it is kept at all on its understandings, comes Aloes, the veterinary surgeon, a pleasant-spoken, florid, little old man, skilful in

his business, ever agreeing, with his 'That I would, sir,' and one who I would much prefer to attend me when sick than many a professor of the healing art among men. The majesty of the law is next upheld by Mr. Sheepskin, the attorney, a gentlemanly man, a light weight, and one who rides, when need be, as hard, if not harder than any one. Nor is the Church absent (for we have not a few clerical subscribers to the Easyallshire Muggers), but is well represented in the person of the Rev. Mr. Flatman, a good-looking, well-built, foxy-whiskered divine, whose handling of the ribbons on the coach-box, and seat on horseback, would entitle him to a deanery at the very least, could the Broad-Church party but come into power. His small country parish, however, does not suffer by the fondness of its rector for the sports of the field; a hard-working and most exemplary curate, he is still a pains-taking and estimable parish priest, and much preferred, I doubt not, by all his parishioners to any more busy and interfering divine of either of the other two schools of divinity. I myself am by no means the sole member of the military profession present, for we are here of all ranks, from the just-joined ensign to the gallant colonel of the county militia, a stout fine-looking veteran, none of your feather-bed soldiers, and one who, spite of his weight, is an exceedingly difficult man to beat across country. 'Mammon,' as it is the fashion nowadays to call that useful article, money, is seen approaching in the person of the Surlyford banker, who, wisely flinging business to the winds at least twice in the week, gets astride a good-looking, nearly thoroughbred nag, and finds accepting bullfinches, negotiating ditches, and discounting gates, stiles, &c., a much more healthy and more pleasant, if not more profitable, occupation than everlastingly grubbing after filthy lucre.

The master now makes his appearance, tall and upright, knowing thoroughly the duties of his office, and if

not quite so bold and determined a rider as in years gone by, still making up for want of nerve in knowledge of the country, and for lack of dash in careful riding and judicious nicking-in. Suffice it to say, that at the finish, his absence is never observed, though how he came to be there is better known to the second-rank horsemen than to the fliers. The huntsman and whip are much the same as those worthies are everywhere; but the hounds, how to describe them I know not.

The Easyallshire Muggers set all rules regarding the make, size, and symmetry of foxhounds at defiance. They show almost better sport, and kill more foxes, than any pack in the kingdom; and yet they are as uneven as a ploughed field, and as many shapes and sizes as a charity school. I can only say, 'handsome is what handsome does;' and if my canine friends are not pleasant to the eye of the connoisseur—if they come not up to Bective, Somerville, and other writers on hunting description of a perfect foxhound, still they act beautifully—which to my mind is far preferable to looking beautiful—and will run and kill foxes with any hounds in England. The huntsman and whip, though not so well mounted (economy is the order of the day with the Easyallshire Muggers), as we would wish to see them, yet manage somehow to get across the country, and to be with their hounds; though for the matter of that, such is the sagacity of the Easyallshire pack, they can very frequently do quite as well without the assistance of their ruler and guide as with it. The Easyallshire Hunt, as the name implies, is an easy-going sort of concern, in which every man, gentle and simple, has a finger in the pie; every subscriber imagining that he has a perfect right, on the strength of his subscription, to hunt, whip-in, or otherwise direct the movements of the hounds whenever opportunity occurs. But for-rard! for-rard on! or I shall be at the fourth milestone on the Surlyford road all day, instead of drawing that

inviting piece of gorse covert which lies so pleasant and warm, with its southern aspect on yonder bank. A guinea to a gooseberry, a fox lies there!

Joe, the huntsman, now trots along through the somewhat bare and brown pasture-fields towards the covert; the pack, eager and keen for the fray, clustering round the heels of his horse. A few moments only elapse and the sea of gorse is alive with hounds poking here, there, and everywhere, seeking the lair of sly Reynard. Old experience having taught me that Gipsy Jim's knowledge of the fox and his habits (for being half-brother to the varmint in his nature, how can it fail to be otherwise?) would serve me in good stead, I station myself near to him in order to have a good view of 'Mr. Reynolds,' as Jim calls the cunning animal, when he breaks covert. Nor am I wrong in my conjecture; for after a few pleasant notes from old Bellman, who hits upon the place where master fox crossed a ride early this morning, and a 'hark to Bellman' from Joe the huntsman, out jumps, almost into Jim's arms, as fine a fox as ever wore a brush. Master Reynard looks somewhat astonished at being brought so suddenly face to face with a two-legged monster, and seems half inclined to turn back again to his hiding-place; but, perhaps judging from Jim's varmint look that no danger might be apprehended from that quarter, and being warned by the deep notes of old Bellman that his late quarters were untenable, he throws back his head as if to sniff the pleasant morning breeze, and giving his brush a gentle wave of defiance, boldly takes to the open, and starts across the field which surrounds the covert at a good rattling pace. Gipsy Jim grins from ear to ear with delight, showing his white regular teeth; at the same time holding up his hand as a warning to me to keep silence for a few seconds, so as not to spoil sport by getting the fox headed back. The moment, however, Master Reynard is safely through the neighbouring hedge,

Jim's tremendous view-halloa makes the whole country ring again. This is the signal for every bumpkin and footman to shout and halloa with might and main, thus making the necessary confusion of the find worse confounded still. 'Hold your noisy tongues,' shout the master, huntsman, whip, and all the horsemen; but 'Hold



your noisy tongues' they cry in vain. 'Tallyho! tallyho! tallyho!' yell the footmen, totally regardless of all expostulation. But crafty Jim, knowing the idiosyncrasy of the yokels, has made all safe by his silence, until the red-coated rascal is well away. 'Hark! halloa!' 'Hark! halloa!' roar the field. 'Tootle, tootle!' goes Joe's horn,

reëchoed by an asthmatical effort in the same direction, on the part of the worthy master, who blows as if his horn was full of dirt. The hounds, however, are accustomed to the sound, feeble as it is, and all rush to the spot where master, huntsman, and Gipsy Jim are all cheering them exactly at the place where foxy broke away. What a burst of music now strikes upon the ear, far superior to the delights of any concert it has ever been my lot to be present at, as the hounds acknowledge with joy the rapture they feel at the strong scent left behind by him they had so unceremoniously disturbed from his comfortable lodgings! But the scent is too good for us to dwell long for description, and away they go at a killing pace, which, if it lasts long enough, will see to the bottom of many a gallant steed there present. And now comes the rush of horsemen amidst the cries of 'Hold hard! don't spoil your sport!' of the master, and the ''Old 'ard!' of the huntsman, who has an eye to tips, and therefore restrains his wrath in some measure. But the Easyallshireans are not to be kept back by any such remonstrances and expostulations as these, and those who mean to be with the hounds throughout the run, hustle along to get a forward place; whilst the knowing and cunning ones, with the master at their head, turn short round, and make for a line of gates which lie invitingly open, right in the direction which the fox has taken. I set a good start, and being well mounted, sailed away, and am soon alongside of Joe the huntsman, whose horse, though a screw, and not very high in condition, is obliged to go, being compelled thereto by its rider. A stiff-looking fence, which I charge at the same moment as Joe, who takes away at least a perch of fencing, and thus lets many a muff through, lands us into the next field, and affords a fair view of the hounds streaming away a little distance before us. But why should I describe the run? *Bell's Life*, weekly, gives much more graphic descriptions of

such things than I am able to write; let me, therefore, confine my narrative to what befell my individual self.

A rattling burst of twenty minutes rendered the field, as may be well imagined, very select, and it would in all probability have become still more so, had not a fortunate check given horses and men a few moments' breathing time, thus enabling the cunning riders to get up to the hounds. 'Away we go again, and I will be there at the finish,' I exclaimed, as pressing my cap firmly on my head, and shutting my eyes, I ride at a tremendous bullfinch, the thick boughs and sharp thorns of which nearly scratch my eyes out and decapitate me as I burst through it. But, as in the case of the renowned John Gilpin, it is—

'Ah, luckless speech and bootless boast,
For which I paid full dear.'

Another ten minutes' best pace and the fox is evidently sinking before us; but, alas! it was not to be my lot to see the gallant animal run into and pulled down in the open, after as fine a run as was ever seen. Trim-kept hedges, well-hung, stout, and newly-painted white gates, had shown me that for the last few moments he had entered the domain of some proprietor, whose estate certainly presented the very pink of neatness. Little indeed did I dream that there would exist in the very heart of Easyallshire any one so benighted as to object to the inroads made upon him by that renowned pack, the Muggers. But I reckoned without my host, or rather, as the sequel will show, with my host; for as, in my endeavours to save my now somewhat exhausted horse, I rode at what appeared an easy place in a very high fence, bounded on the off-side with a stiff post and rail, an irate elderly gentleman, gesticulating, shouting, and waving an umbrella in his hand, suddenly rose up as it were from the very bowels of the earth, just as my steed was preparing to

make his spring, thus causing the spirited animal to rear up, and, overbalancing himself, to fall heavily to the ground with me under him. When I next recovered consciousness and opened my eyes, I was being borne along on a hurdle, by the author of my misfortunes—a gray-haired, piebald-whiskered, stout, little, red-faced old gentleman—and two of his satellites, whom I rightly conjectured to be the coachman and gardener; but the pain of my broken leg made me relapse into unconsciousness, nor did the few wits I by nature possess return to me again until I was laid on a bed, and a medical practitioner of the neighbourhood was busy at work setting my fractured limb. To make a long story short, I remained under the roof of Major Pipeclay—for that was the name of the irascible little gentleman whose hatred of hunting, hounds, and horses had caused my suffering—until my wounded limb was well again, the worthy old major doing all in his power to make amends for the catastrophe his absurd violence had brought about.

At the expiration of six weeks I was able to move about on crutches; at the termination of twice that period, I was well again, and had, moreover, fallen irretrievably in love with the bright eyes and pretty face of Belinda Pipeclay, one of the major's handsome daughters. Thinking, in my ignorance of the fair sex, that the child of so irascible a papa—having been in her juvenile days well tutored under the Solomonian code of 'sparing the rod, and spoiling the child'—must therefore, of necessity, make a submissive and obedient wife, I proposed, was accepted, obtained the major's consent, and became a Benedict.

Dear reader, I am really ashamed to confess the truth: 'I have been severely henpecked ever since.' Whether Belinda possesses the same antipathy to hounds, horses, and hunting men as her progenitor, I cannot possibly tell; for returning to India soon after my marriage, I had no opportunity of there testing her feelings in that respect.

Now the increasing number of mouths in our nursery compels a decreasing ratio of animals in my stable, and I am reduced to one old broken-winded cripple, which I call 'the Machiner.' He takes Mrs. Sabretache and myself to the market town on a Saturday, and mamma, papa, and the little Sabretaches to church on the following day.



Drawn by G. B. GODDARD.]

THE SPORTSMAN'S RESOLVE.



A NIGHT AMONG WILD-FOWL.

THERE are few matters connected with our field-sports which have provoked so much superfluous satire and angry recrimination as the feud between 'flight-shooters' and punt-gun shooters. Into this question it is unnecessary, in giving a description of a night's adventures with wild-fowl, that I should enter. I merely remark that a man may be a flight-shooter without being an outrageous villain, and that a punt-gun shooter need not necessarily be an abandoned wretch. Both have got much to say on their respective sides of the dispute. It must be remembered that the wild-fowl along our coasts and marshes have to be slain for the table; and that, whether sportsmen adopt the plan or not, the shooting down of the birds in large quantities by punt-guns will not be discontinued. If a man finds his highest notions of sport in stealing along a creek in a wet punt and discharging suddenly upon a mass of sitting widgeon the contents of a huge gun—if the utmost point of his ambition is to kill his seventy wild-duck with one shot, why should he not so enjoy himself? No one would seek to limit his pleasures; for, after all, these birds have to be shot for the market. But surely he might be satisfied with the number of his slain and the brilliant adventures of the pursuit, without constantly accompanying them with much illogical abuse of those who prefer to shoot mallard and teal as they shoot partridge and pheasant—that is to say, by the exercise of their individual skill directed against the natural safeguard of the birds, their flight. The man who brings down his two or three couple of duck as they

pass to and fro between their places of rest and feeding is accused of frightening away the wild-fowl from our shores; and the accusation comes from a man who descends upon a whole flock and kills them by the fifty!

However, there was no question of theoretical comparison on that evening which saw us assembled in the warm kitchen of Marshlands House, hastily donning those great boots, warm wrappers, and furry caps with which we were about to face the cold night air.

'It *is* werry cold, sir,' said the ancient and faithful Peter, coming in from without, and rubbing his hands briskly.

'And clear?' asked Peter's master.

'Yes, sir; clear starlight. The moon isn't up yet, sir—at least, not to speak on—law! sir, you'll ha' your coat on fire!'

The last exclamation was addressed not to Peter's master, who was a small, thin, neat gentleman, but to a large and corpulent Scotch Bailie, who had come down to the Marshlands on a visit, and was at this moment so torturing his gigantic frame with the effort to get on his boots, that his coat-tails, sticking out, had almost touched the glowing coals.

'Losh, me!' cried the Bailie, as he tugged and gasped; 'I had nae thocht that doon here a man had to pit on boots to gang a-shootin' in—for a' the world as if he was aboot to stand in a burn a' day and fish for sawmon. And I'm feared it'll be unco cauld if we've got to wade at the dead o' nicht through a lot o' sheughs and ditches.'

'A man of your figure, Bailie, should not feel the cold,' said Mr. Penley, whose firm, muscular, nervous constitution was much better fitted to withstand cold than Bailie Gemmill's soft sensitive adiposity; 'and, besides, you have as many wrappers there as might make your outfit for an Arctic cruise.'

The Bailie proceeded to wind himself up in these wrap-

pers, until, at last, his dimensions were simply enormous. He seemed one huge mass of gray wool, muffled up so that his neck had to be kept stiff, and so that he could scarcely stoop to pick up his gun. The dogs, on seeing him lift the well-known implement, jumped up and began to bark with delight, the stout gentleman endeavouring to pacify them with husky endearments which half-stuck in his throat.

'Doon, dowgs, doon! Doon, Teeger; doon, Walnut, ye'll wauken the whole house! Dear me, Peter, why dinna ye tak the dowgs outside?'

Peter, being appealed to, speedily silenced the dogs; and a few minutes thereafter we left the ruddy comfortable kitchen, and passed out into the open air.

The Bailie shivered.

'The wind's aff the sea,' he said, as if he had suddenly plunged into a cold bath.

It was really a fine night, clear and bright, with just sufficient moonlight to detect the outlines of objects. Our party were almost wholly dressed in gray; and as we passed silently away from the immediate environs of Marshlands House, we might easily have been taken for a company of restless spirits by any unfortunate yokel who happened to be out at that unearthly hour.

We were now bound for one of those wild-fowl haunts which are every day becoming rarer—one of those secluded districts of our sea-coast which have escaped the perils of becoming famous, where wild-fowl find a retreat which is only invaded by one or two local guns, and where the possibilities for getting near the birds are unusually facile. I do not think a punt-gun had ever been used in this particular corner of the world; the owner of Marshlands House, who did the most of the shooting in the district, being far too great a lover of the ordinary method, and too great an admirer of his personal prowess with a double-barrel.

At one point Mr. Penley's shooting-ground went right down to the sea; and our first move was in that direction, where, as he promised, we were to witness a pretty sight. We were walking quietly along the side of a bit of cover, in order to reach the open land near the shore, when we were startled by a loud clack! clack! and the breaking away of a pair of tolerably large birds from out the bushes. They rose as they flew, and just as the dark specks were visible against the clear sky, up went Penley's two barrels and down came both birds in fine style. The rattle the barrels made in the deep stillness of the night seemed rather to have disconcerted the Bailie, who had, as he said, received no warning that a gun was to be fired close to his ear. The dogs soon brought in the birds; and these proved to be—as their cry of danger had led us to expect—a brace of woodcocks, which Penley considered, for his country, a quite wonderful stroke of luck.

As we neared the shore, the greatest precautions were of course taken to prevent the slightest noise carrying on an intimation of our approach to the birds we expected to find there. Presently, however, we heard distinctly through the deep silence that continued, varied, and loud whistling, which tells that a company of widgeon are sailing about in the neighbourhood. They had probably been startled by the double shot fired by Penley; and as they would now be more strictly than ever on the watch, the greatest caution was necessary in approaching them. By and by we found ourselves in front of a sort of bank, covered with clumps of furze-bushes, and towards the top of this height we quietly crept. The bank overlooked the long shelving plain that the receding tide had left exposed; and as we gained the summit and met the strong cold sea-breeze, it brought us a confused sound of the waves, which, too far out of sight to be distinguished as anything but a dense purple mass, were wearily lashing the coast.

'It's extraordinar' dark!' muttered the Bailie, as he puffed and panted with his previous exertions. 'I can see naething ava!'

'Hush!' said Penley, as he kept carefully scanning that long expanse of sea-board before us.

The clamour of the cock-widgeon had ceased, and it was almost certain the company had settled somewhere in our neighbourhood. In time, as our eyes became accustomed to the place, we perceived a large black patch on the dull gray plain—a broad dark stain, as if a great stretch of the shore were covered with sea-weed. My friend pointed this out to the Bailie.

'That dark place, that looks like a broad island, is one mass of birds as thick as ever they can sit.'

I fancied I saw the huge man tremble. He raised his elbow and brought up his gun.

'What are you going to do?' I asked.

'Shoot!' he whispered. 'Ane might kill a dizzen out o' such a lot!'

'Nonsense!' muttered Penley angrily; 'you might as well try to kill them with a pea-shooter. Let us go back now, and try the lakes.'

We descended from the bank and struck inland in another direction. Our course was now over a tract of marsh which was intersected with deep gullies, many of which had runnels of water in their depths. We did follow a certain path and crossed one or two of the deeper gullies by means of planks that had been thrown across; but on the whole our method of travelling was a severe one, and the Bailie groaned in spirit. At last he came to a standstill on the brink of a gully which seemed to have a dangerous assortment of succulent water-plants along its course.

'I winna stir a foot,' he said firmly.

'Why?'

'I'll wait here till the birds begin to pass overhead.'

I'm no used to jumpin' ower bogs in the middle of the night like a will-o'-the-wisp.'

'The birds won't begin their flight for a couple of hours yet,' I said.

'I dinna care. I'm no a gutta-percha ball to stot, and stot, and stot from ditch to ditch, and look as if I liked it. I don't like it.'

'Hold your tongue and listen, Bailie,' said Penley.

He did as he was desired; and then we heard clearly and distinctly the different cries of the wild-fowl—the quacking of the mallard, the hoarser cry of the teal, and even an occasional plaintive scream from a curlew.

'There's music for you! Can you resist the invitation? These birds are wheeling about the small lakes over there, or paddling about on the water.'

'There's plenty of water here,' grumbled the Bailie.

'What's the use o' stoppin' 'ere, sir?' said Peter respectfully, but firmly. 'The duck won't come near you, if you stand out on the marshes like this.'

Bailie Gemmill was at length goaded into following us; and in time we left the roughest part of the marsh behind us, and drew near the partially wooded hollow in which lay several patches of water which Penley dignified with the name of lakes. Peter now took the lead, having both dogs leashed, and guided us down a narrow valley which was well filled with bushes. Behind these bushes we crept along, scarcely daring to breathe, and feeling carefully for our footing before making each step. Then he halted, and we crept to the front. Peering over the thickest part of the bushes and through the bare twigs of the top, we saw before us a quiet little tarn which, on one side especially, where the thin moonlight fell upon it, was of a faint gray. Penley moved further along, and, in passing, whispered,

'Do not fire for a few minutes, until I get into a good position. Pick out a diver for your first shot.'

The Bailie and Peter remained with me, the latter having a spare gun with him. The Bailie shivered perceptibly, either through cold or the agonies of anticipation.

On the darker side of the tarn were a lot of rushes and sedge; and it seemed to me that I could vaguely distinguish certain black forms moving through this tall vegetation. The surface of the water was quite blank, until a diver suddenly popped up and began slowly paddling away. I fancied he was a golden eye, and he offered an easy shot, had it been worth while to shoot him singly. By and by there was a loud quacking among the rushes, and presently we could distinguish a number of black objects swimming out into the gray of the tarn. On they came, one after the other, apparently quite unconscious of the danger lurking near them, until the surface of the pond was thickly dotted with their dusky forms. I touched Peter on the arm, and pointed to the spare gun. He nodded in reply.

One or two divers now made their appearance, bobbing up and down continually. Watching my chance, I caught sight of one which had just risen, and at the same moment I uttered a short whistle. He turned instantaneously, his head slightly thrown up, and in the same second he received the contents of my right barrel. The sharp ring of the gun was the signal for such a noise and confusion as fairly astounded me. I had no idea that the sedges round this little tarn contained such a mass of birds as now rose into the air, screaming and whirring. The signal was repeated by a couple of shots from the post in which Penley was placed, followed by a couple of splashes in the water, and at the same time the Bailie let drive into 'the thick of them' with his two barrels, while I discharged my remaining barrel, and managed also to pick off a couple of late and frightened stragglers with the spare gun which Peter handed to me.

'Where did your birds fall, sir?' asked Peter of the Bailie.

'How should I ken?' retorted the other indignantly. 'I fired into the birds: how could mortal man tell where they drapped?'

Peter was soon down by the side of the water, and the two dogs swimming about in search of the dead birds. In a few minutes they had recovered two couple of mallard, a couple of teal, and a bird which we, in the semi-darkness, concluded to be a golden eye. The latter must have been killed at once, as these birds when they are wounded dive, and very frequently never return to the surface.

'There's another bird somewhere, Peter,' said the Bailie. 'Ye have only seeven, and we fired eight shots. It's no possible that I could ha' missed, for ye see I ha' a bit o' paper on the barrel, and I fired as straught as a line.'

There was something exceedingly ingenuous in the Bailie's supposing that we would of course accuse him of the missed shot; but Penley comforted him by saying that Peter should return at break of day to see if some wounded bird had concealed itself among the rushes.

'And seeven out o' eight is no bad, Mr. Penley,' he remarked, in reply, 'when ye conseeder that we are shootin' in the deed o' the nicht.'

'This isn't the dead of night, Bailie,' said Penley, as he reloaded. 'This is a fine clear morning.'

'May be,' said the Bailie, 'may be. But I'd like to see ye read a chapter in Nehemiah the noo.'

We pushed on to the next tarn, which was in size about the same as that we had just left.

'The birds will be very wary,' said Penley, 'for they must have heard the sound of our guns. Indeed, we may find none at all there.'

We advanced very circumspectly; and as we neared

the tarn, we were skirting the edge of a ditch in which there was a little runnel of water. Here a most unlucky accident occurred. By some means or other Bailie Gemmill had got on a little in front, and was picking his steps carefully by the side of the gully, when a loud and sudden noise caused him fairly to spring back. About half a dozen wild-duck had been down in the ditch, and had risen almost from under his feet with that clatter and whir and crying which mark the fright of the mallard. The Bailie received such a shock that in springing back he stumbled or slipped, and the next moment he had tumbled down into the ditch, while a terrific report announced to us that both barrels of his gun had gone off. Penley did not even look after his friend. He saw in a moment that the cries of these mallard would ruin our only chance of getting a shot on the adjoining tarn; and so, with admirable presence of mind, he put up his gun and brought down the last couple of the ducks which had caused the mishap. All this had occurred so simultaneously that it was only as an afterthought that he remembered the explosion of the Bailie's gun, which had taken place with his own; and then, as he turned to the watery hole in which our friend had sunk, Peter said, as he scrambled down the bank,

'Lor, sir, I fear he's hurt hisself. But a deal o' the shot just passed my ear.'

The Bailie was clearly not dead. There was a splashing and heaving among the reeds, as though a hippopotamus were washing himself in the place; and there was a hoarse sound—a stream of ejaculations and expletives in broad resonant Scotch.

'You're not hurt, sir?' said Peter.

'Hoo do *ye* ken?' growled the maddened Bailie. 'Lend me a hand, I tell ye; and if ever ye catch me come shootin' in such a —— place as this—ye—why don't ye come nearer?'

A large and dark form now made its appearance on the bank.

'Where's the gun, sir?' asked Peter.

'—— the gun! Let it rot there! If I get safe out, the gun may stay in.'

'I beg your pardon, Bailie; but the gun is mine,' said Penley.

'And so is the ditch, I suppose,' said the Bailie, struggling into the moonlight. 'I tell ye, Maister Penley, if ye left a place like that in Scotland wi'oot puttin' a paling round it, the law would hang ye. And it's a perfect meeracle ye havena my life to answer for; for I declare I felt the wind o' the shot on my face.'

'But why did you tumble in?' said Penley, who could not repress a smile on meeting the melancholy figure now presented by the half-drowned Bailie.

'I've got the gun, sir,' said Peter, from below. 'And lucky it is it didn't fall into the water.'

'What way lucky?' exclaimed the Bailie. 'Do ye expect me, Maister Penley, to conteenue this madcap business, and risk my life for the pleasure o' shootin' at birds in the daurk?'

'Come, come, Bailie,' said Penley. 'You must do something to keep your circulation going; and you may as well load again and go with us. You would never find your way home from here.'

'Deed, I'll no try,' said the Bailie earnestly.

There was nothing for it, therefore, but that he should accompany us; and so, having ascertained that his powder-flask, wads, &c., were dry, we again started.

Of course, there was not a bird on or around this second tarn when we approached it. The report of the Bailie's gun had been followed by a succession of quacks and screams which told that, had we reached the water in silence, we should have had some sport. The couple

of mallard shot by Penley were the only spoil which fell to us from this second effort.

The third and last piece of water was larger than its predecessors, and might even, with some stretch of courtesy, have been called a small lake. Its shores were very level, and we experienced great difficulty in approaching it with safety. At some distance the cries of the wild-fowl could be distinguished, and were so numerous as to convince us that here, at least, the birds had not been scared off.

Then the Bailie stopped.

'I'm sayin',' he remarked, 'I think I'll no gang forrit to the water. I'm too cauld to be able to shoot. I'll sit down here and take a drop o' whisky and a sandwich I have in my pocket; and ye can come back here when ye have done. Losh me, what's that?'

'A hare, sir,' said Peter, as some dark object darted past, and scuttled away among the long grass.

'As you please, Bailie,' said Penley. 'And if you are not going to shoot, you may give me your gun.'

'Wi' pleasure,' said the Bailie, with a sigh of relief.

We now proceeded to seek the shore of the lake at a spot where there was a small creek, in which lay a broad flat-bottomed punt. The punt was moored beside some bushes, and it was to these bushes we looked for means to get down unperceived to the water. When we had finally crept down to the margin, and could look abroad over the still surface of the water, it was soon apparent that the wild-fowl were present in considerable numbers. They seemed to be more on the outlook, however, than they were on the first tarn; and several times we feared lest some wheeling duck might spy out our hiding-place and give the alarm to his companions.

No such awkward accident occurred, however; and for several minutes we stood, admiring the slow circles made on the surface of the water by the dark forms of

the birds. The moonlight was now a little stronger, and the water was of a decided bluish-gray tinge, on which the wild-fowl seemed quite black. Now and then a stray wanderer came sailing down and alighted on the water with a loud 'swish,' which caused all his companions to jerk their heads about. There was one especially erratic fellow, who went on long circular excursions all by himself; and on one of these we saw that he was evidently coming straight towards us. Afraid of being taken unawares, we simultaneously rose up, exposing the upper half of our bodies above the bushes. In an instant the whole place was a scene of wild clamour, excited quacking and croaking, and rapid wheeling up into the air. Bang! bang! went Penley's first gun, simultaneously with my own; and then again the barrels of the remaining guns echoed through the silence of the place.

Peter jumped into the punt with his dogs.

'Come quick, sir—we'll push across, and find one or two hiding in the rushes.'

We got into the punt, and loaded as quickly as possible, allowing Peter to paddle us silently across. On the way we passed more than one dead bird, towards which the dogs would fain have leapt, had we not restrained them.

Scarcely had the broad prow of the shallow punt rustled in upon the sedges when a couple of mallard fluttered up and flew off right and left. One fell to each of us, Penley's bird dropping well up on shore. This was a good beginning; but we found that the sedgy margin did not contain the number of birds we had begun to anticipate. Another wild-duck did get up; but it rose far out of shot, and we were about to return when I heard a flapping and splashing in among the reeds.

'It is a wounded bird,' said Peter, unleashing one of the dogs. 'Go in, Walnut—go in, good dog, and seek him out.'

Walnut sprang boldly into the water, made for the rushes, and after a little plunging about returned with the bird in her mouth. It was a duck which had only been winged, the *coup de grâce* being reserved for Peter's experienced fingers.

This being the finish of our lake-shooting, and there being still some time to elapse before the morning flight-shooting would commence, we began a brisk hunt after the killed. The Bailie, being whistled for, came down to the punt and took a seat, though he was greatly incommoded—as were we—by the wet dogs. He maintained, however, that he now felt very comfortable, that he no longer experienced any cold, and that he was willing to do anything or go anywhere so long as the sport could be continued.

'I think it is an astonishin' fine sensation to be out here, a' by yoursel', in the deed o' nicht, and they great birds fleein' about your head. I dinna wonder, Maister Penley, that ye are glad to live in this oot-o'-the-world place, when ye have such sport aye before ye; and my wonder is that ye are na out every night in your life.'

'If we kept continually popping at them, they'd soon leave us,' said Penley, as he took a mallard out of Walnut's mouth.

The Bailie grew enormously loquacious. He became quite poetical in describing the enchanting pleasures of wild-fowl shooting, and said he should remember this night so long as he lived.

'By the way, Maister Penley,' he remarked, in a sort of bashful way, 'have ye anything left in your flask?'

'I thought you had filled your flask before we started,' said Penley, 'and it is twice as big as mine.'

'And so I did,' said the Bailie, with a little hesitation; 'but I was extraordinar' thirsty after that cauld bath, and I couldna exactly get at the water, so I—so I had to empty the flask. But never mind. I feel very comfort-

able, and doubtless ye'll need a' you have got before the night's over.'

'Very likely,' said Penley, 'for we have now got to tramp over to the river side, where I hope we shall get a little shooting.'

The Bailie rose from his seat with a half-stifled sigh, and as the boat touched the corner of the creek he stepped ashore. The birds we had shot, already too heavy for one man to carry, were locked up in the spacious locker of the punt; and then we set out on our journey towards the river. This small stream, in flowing towards the sea, passed Marshlands House, and was not only a valuable resort for grebe, moor-hens, and similar birds, but also offered excellent shelter in which to await the passing and repassing, at early morning and dusk, of the flocks of wild-fowl which haunted the locality. The Bailie looked forward to this bit of flight-shooting with an animation which was not altogether the result of the whisky he had drank. The mere consciousness that we were going in the direction of home, that daylight would soon break, and that along the banks of the river there were no treacherous pitfalls, cheered him; and he even volunteered to sing, in a hoarse cawing way, some guttural Scotch drinking-song, which was, perhaps fortunately, quite unintelligible.

Along the side of the stream whither we were now bound there lay a strip of marshy ground, chiefly covered with young willows. The underwood was considerably thick, especially at the point to which Peter led us; and we had little difficulty in choosing successive spots, some fifty yards separate, where we could easily lie concealed, while leaving a tolerably large open space around us. Peter's chief care was to hide away the elephantine bulk of the Bailie; and when that had been done, he was cautioned to remain perfectly still and invisible.

A dead silence hung over the place for several minutes,

broken only by the rippling of the dark water round the sudden curves of its course, and the creaking of willow stumps in the wind. A fresh breeze was blowing, and we knew the birds, if they passed our way at all, would fly low and offer an easy shot. In the midst of this stillness, I heard the even heavy tramp of the Bailie's footsteps approaching.

'Tell me,' he said, in a loud whisper, as he came up, 'am I to shoot at the birds as they flee towards me, or as they're fleeing past?'

'You'd better let them get past,' I said; 'but how do you expect they'll come here if you stand out in the open and talk?'

'Mercy me! hoo could a bird see ye on a night like this? It has got quite dark—and—preserve us!'

He was struck into silence by a great whirring of wings overhead that sounded as if the prince of the power of the air were himself rushing past. The ring of my two barrels, followed by the double report of Penley's gun, did not lessen his astonishment.

'What did ye fire at? What was that? What a fricht I got!'

'Why, a fine string of wild-duck,' said I; 'though how they came so near while you were standing there I don't know. I wish you'd go and hide yourself again, Bailie.'

'Do ye mean to tell me ye shot anything?'

'Of course I did.'

'And Maister Penley?'

'Yes. Didn't you hear the birds fall?'

'That's maist extraordinar',' muttered the Bailie, as he returned to his post.

For some time thereafter the plashing of the water resumed its hold on the ear; not even the distant cry of a bird could be detected. A faint gray tinge now became visible in the eastern sky, and the moon sensibly

paled her light. The advance of the dawn, as every one must have noticed who has had leisure to sit and watch its approach, is exceedingly rapid, while it appears to be quite the reverse. The change is so gradual that one does not notice how objects, hitherto invisible, come into relief. The bushes on the other side of the stream grew out of the darkness, and the black branches above us were beginning to be defined against the clear sky. Fortunately the wind still kept up, and I was momentarily expecting to hear the report of the Bailie's gun, to him having been accorded the best position.

It was certainly a quarter of an hour before any new flock of birds came near us—this time a compact skein of duck, about fifteen or twenty in number. They flew right over the bushes in which the Bailie was hid; I heard both his barrels; but, of course, could not distinguish at that distance whether anything fell. The birds redoubled their flight, two or three going off in one direction, two or three in another, all making the loudest noise possible. One came directly over me, and fell; another flew behind the trees on the other side of the river, and him I missed. Penley did not get a shot.

We were again lapped in silence; but we could hear that the general flight of the wild-fowl was taking place. We could distinguish the cries of the mallard and the croaking of the teal in large numbers. We lay as silent as a fox: but the repeated firing of the guns had apparently taught them to suspect the locality, and, although we occasionally heard the passing whir of a string of birds, they kept carefully beyond reach.

The gray was now telling upon the sky, and a comparative twilight reigned in the hollow which secreted us. I could now make out the red bill of a moor-hen, which, having been frightened by my approach, had paddled into the nearest refuge, and now sat quietly in the water, at the root of a willow on the other side of

the stream, her head only being visible. I am almost certain she could see me, and concluded she was too afraid to leave her present hiding-place for a more sheltered one.

I was watching the occasional twitching of the red beak when another rushing of wings in the neighbourhood caught my attention. A dark cloud of birds now swept overhead—I fired right and left—they broke in wild confusion, and at least half a dozen went over Penley. By that time, however, they had risen high into the air, and only one fell to his two shots.

After this the cries of the wild-fowl died down; it was now broad daylight, and it had become evident that no more business was to be done that morning. Before leaving Peter and the dogs, however, to recover the birds we had shot, I called the Bailie, and pointed out to him the moor-hen which still sat in the water. I am ashamed to say that he lifted his gun, and would have murdered the bird then and there, had he not been interrupted. I prevailed on him to allow Walnut to cross, and this the dog speedily did. The moor-hen remained until the dog had almost touched her, then she swam quickly out and disappeared into another hole. Here she refused to be dislodged; and the end of it was that the dog dragged her out in his mouth, punishing her severely in the process.

When he had swum back I took the moor-hen from him, and found her quite lively.

'Now,' I said to the Bailie, 'look out!'

I threw the bird up into the air; the Bailie did not fire; she dropped on the water, and dived. Of course she was seen no more; but two seconds after she had dived the Bailie fired at the place where she had disappeared. Peter made an insolent grimace behind the worthy Bailie's back; and at the same moment—whether startled out of her retreat by the report, or whether put

up by Walnut, I cannot say—another moor-hen rushed out and flew straight up the stream. As she again descended on the water, leaving a long line of light in her wake, the Bailie fired his second barrel; the unhappy moor-hen jumped a foot into the air, fell into the river, and then came slowly floating down stream, her pale-green legs uppermost.

The Bailie marched home in the proudest way, and carried his gun in a quite masterly manner. I foresaw that we should be treated to a few sporting reminiscences after dinner that evening, graced with such efforts of the imagination as should appear to the Bailie to be most suitable. In the mean time, however, we went straight to bed on reaching Marshlands House, for we had to be present at some coursing which was to take place in the neighbourhood towards mid-day.

MISS MIDDLESEX ON THE MOORS

TO MISS SARAH JANE MIDDLESEX, GREEN ELM GROVE COTTAGE, BAYSWATER.



August ——,
Lodge of Donashuishluagnish.



ON'T attempt to pronounce it, dear; you will spoil the shape of your nose; but try to imagine your beloved Delia (in her new tartan gown and *the* Balmorals) sitting at a bare table in a low-roofed room, with very little inside it save a smell of peat-smoke, but the most wonderful and beautiful view in the world out of its windows.

As to our journey. It was less adventurous and romantic than I would have desired. The impressions that

I had brought ready-made with me were far more like Sir Walter Scott's Highlands than the reality. To tell the truth, I was asleep when we passed Edinburgh, Perth, and Stirling, and missed seeing the combat of the clan Chattan and clan Khay on the Inch, and the frowning passes of the Grampians, for which I had prepared myself. Not till we had passed Dunkeld, and had quitted the main road for a most precipitous and sterile route, did we feel ourselves really in a new country, and even then my first feeling was one of disappointment. I looked in vain for kilted clansmen roving over the heather; for eagles' feathers and waving plaids. Dirty-white sheep, and stones without end, clothed the hill-sides, and the kilt—literally speaking—was only worn by the *women* that we encountered. It was dark when we reached this dear unpronounceable little lodge. Charlie and Uncle Tom received us. I was in ecstasies with all I found here.

It is quite unlike anything near Bayswater. Heather everywhere, and hills all round. Heather not like the pink thing one gets at 'Foster's' for wreaths, but tall knots and knobs of stiff, *stiff* brown and purple—most beautiful and glowing in colour at a distance, and terribly *scratchy* to walk on.

Not a tree anywhere. Aunt Jane was disconsolate at first—she called it a desert; but since she found cabbages and gooseberry-bushes in the garden, and a pigsty behind the kennel, she has taken courage, and says it is 'extremely rural.' The Lodge is a long low building, rather like a shed, with very small rooms and very stiff doors—no staircase to the upper story, but a big ladder by which I mount to my bedroom. I chose of my own accord to have my room up there, and it feels, oh, so delightfully romantic to go up a ladder every evening—just like Romeo and Juliet—only, as the trap-door at the top is very small, I have great difficulty with my crinoline, which has twice refused to accompany me downwards, and nearly kept me

suspended in mid-air all this morning. . . . I must postpone further description till I have given you a graphic account of our expedition to the Tilt Meeting, from which we have just returned, and where, dear Sarah Jane, I may as well tell you, I have lost my heart—lost it once and for *ever*. Charlie took us—Aunt Jane and me. We started early on Monday; Charlie wearing the kilt for the first time, and I an eagle's feather in my hat, as like Flora Macdonald as possible.

After a long drive through the wildest country, we reached a great green field near Blair, just as a tremendous yelling of pipes announced the approach of the grand mufti and his suite; in other words, the Athole Highlanders, headed by their noble chief.

Such a crowd there was!

Such carriages and coaches full! People on, in, and under them; and at a little distance from us who but the Joneses! Yes, the Joneses of Hammersmith, and Emma in the old pink bonnet. Judge of my feelings!

O Sarah Jane, there were Highlanders everywhere! It was like *Rob Roy* and *Waverley*, and all Sir Walter's novels put together; and some of them (the Highlanders I mean) were exactly like the boy who plays the bagpipes in Edgware-road.

They strutted about, and swung themselves so grandly when they moved; but Charlie looked nicer than any, I thought, for his kilt was so long, and his knees so much whiter and smoother than theirs.

I was so overpowered by the pibrochs and the tramping of armed men, that I scarcely know what I thought of it all; but I am sure it was astonishing and magnificent to a degree.

The games began directly, and were exactly like the pictures in the *Illustrated News*. Highlanders dancing together on their tiptoes, and then throwing big sticks and stones about, and taking off nearly all their clothes. I was

rather horrified, till I observed that those who undressed most completely were given the first prizes, after which I supposed it to be part of the exhibition.

A hideous noise went on all the time, subdued slightly by distance, and which they told me was a trial of pipe-playing—not the applause of the lower regions, as I suggested.

We saw an aristocratic lunch going on in the tent towards mid-day; all the outsiders sat down on the grass to eat and drink, and so did we. It was most romantic, dear Sarah Jane. We had nothing to drink (Charlie having left the ginger-beer in the carriage), and I was complaining of thirst, when a beautifully-dressed person in purple-and-scarlet tartans, and buckles, and belts, and chains to no end, who was near us, came and offered me his sherry-and-water in a silver cup. At least I *thought* it had been sherry-and-water till I tasted it—and it was very polite of him all the same, and I daresay he took me for a real Scotchwoman from my eagle's feather—only it was whisky-and-water, and made me sneeze and cough so! and he told us he was 'The Macshneishan,' and he made great friends with Charlie, and stayed by us all day.

I had been in alternate wonder and delight at all I saw till, at the end of the 'games,' when I was talking to The Macshneishan about 'Prince Charlie,' a great shouting and shrieking startled me. All the people were rushing past us, over us almost. The Macshneishan jumped up, seized me by the arm. I found myself running as hard as I could, I knew not whither. One glance behind me showed what fearful cause I had to run! Half-naked savages, with hair and beards streaming in the wind, were flying after us, tearing over the ground with lightning speed!

Terror overcame me. I should have fallen, but for the arm of my gallant chieftain!

One moment after the air rung with shouts of applause. The crowd stood still and clapped their hands.

They told me the cheering was for the winner of a race that had just been run. But, dear Sarah Jane, I do not, I cannot believe it. My firm conviction is (and Aunt Jane agrees with me), that the gallant conduct of The



Macshneishan alone saved me from a too terrible fate, and that, the danger once averted, it was judged wisest to pass over the incident in silence. These fierce Highland clans must be gently dealt with. This is my idea and Aunt Jane's. At all events, dear, you will agree with me, in being thankful to Providence that in *our* country the

men run in *sacks*, where there can be no doubt as to their intentions.

We returned to the inn. Aunt Jane and I tea'd together on the top of my big box, for the hotel was so full that we had no sitting-room. Charlie dined at the ordinary, and we heard shouts and stamping that shook the house whenever a toast was given.

They are so enthusiastic, these dear Highlanders!

At nine o'clock, Aunt Jane and I, duly equipped, descended to the ballroom, and were met by Charlie and my noble acquaintance of the morning, who claimed me for the first dance. I was just going to put my hand on his arm for a waltz when the pipes burst forth in a loud discordant strain, and all the room with one accord began to hop and turn. I did not know what to do: I had learnt the Highland Fling years ago; but how to kick out one leg, when I had a long dress and a crinoline—

Opposite to me first danced my partner, and then another Highlander, springing high into the air, and twirling his arms, and from time to time we all changed places at once. I was bewildered, and half despaired. Suddenly the tune changed, the dancers shouted, and I found my arm seized by the elbow, and spun round and round, till I was dizzy. My dear, they were dancing a Hoolachan! No wonder they give their dances odd names! I would have run off to Aunt Jane, if I could have escaped from the flying plaids and garters that surrounded me, and my relief was enormous when the noise stopped, and my chieftain, suddenly becoming calm and silent, took me to my seat.

What surprised me most during the evening was the extraordinary control these wild people exercised over themselves during the other dances. They quadrilled, they waltzed, they Lancered as quietly as if they had never heard a bagpipe; but when a reel began, the room shook with their leaping and shrieking.

I watched the ladies, who were as demure as their partners were excited, and I adopted their step before long. It is perfectly easy—only to shake your dress violently, and run from side to side, and at a change in the tune to run into the middle of your 'set,' and turn about so as to make as much confusion as possible. I will teach you when we come home, dear.

I saw Emma Jones green with envy, because I danced with a real Highlander; so I walked about as much as possible before her, arm-in-arm with him: was not that capital?

There was a great supper. We sat on the narrowest of benches, at long tables, and the grandees were placed according to rank, at the top of the room. I strained my neck to look at them, and after all they were much like other people, and not half so smart as Aunt Jane and myself (Aunt Jane wore the topazes, and I had my green-and-gold wreath, with two new lilac feathers).

There were some long speeches, with thumpings and stampings of applause, and when the healths were drunk, all the gentlemen stood up on one leg on their seats, and put the other leg on the table, and sneezed violently.* It was a most exciting, I may say, a most terrible noise, and has doubtless some deep significance. Aunt Jane's feelings were too much for her. 'Delia,' she whispered across the table to me,—'Delia, I desire you will follow me, *directly*,' and she actually got up, and would have left the room, had not the foot of a gentleman on each side of her pinned her gown to the bench. 'It is most indecent,' she said, over and over again, and put her fan up to her face, and spoke so loud, that I trembled lest the high-spirited mountaineers might hear and resent her speech. Luckily the noise was too great for the words to reach any ears but mine; and for my part, I only wished the ladies also

* N.B.—Miss Middlesex probably alludes to the Highland toast, Neish—neish neesh—ha neish.

might stand on the table. I was so excited—quite *hors de moi*, as the French say.

Friday Evening.

DEAREST SARAH JANE,—I left off yesterday in order to accompany Aunt Jane in a mountain ramble, and now—in a different, alas! far different frame of mind—I resume my pen. I have had a blow, a sad blow, Sarah Jane; but wait—I will begin at the beginning—you shall know all. Calmness may return to your agitated Delia, while she writes of the trivialities that preceded her bitter disappointment.

Unaccompanied by maid or footman (people walk *quite* alone in Scotland), we set out; and after an hour's walking over hill and dale, found ourselves—we knew not where—opposite a small hovel or bothie.

Too tired to proceed further or to return, Aunt Jane began to bemoan her fate, and *I*—with that confidence in the natives that the perusal of the *Cottagers of Glenburnie* ever inspires—proposed that we should seek rest and shelter from the noonday sun in the humble abode before us.

When I reached the aperture—there was no door—out rushed a howling trio of dogs, gaunt, hungry, bright-toothed dogs. Our shrieks, as we clung to each other, brought the mistress of the house to our rescue; an unlovely person, in scanty garments, who kicked the dogs off us, and uttered nasal sounds of objurgation to them and consolation to us, pointing a welcome to the bothie with her hand.

We were very tired, but the interior seemed so uninviting a mixture of darkness and dogs, that we declined entering, and sat on turf benches close to the door. Conversation was impossible, for our hostess could not speak English, and when I said 'Come-er-ashen-doo,' over and over again (that is the Gaelic phrase for a greeting), she

only shook her head, and said, 'Noo, noo,' in melancholy tones not unlike those of her canine companions.

However, she was a good creature, and brought us a bowl full of the most delicious creamy milk, which greatly refreshed us, and for which she would receive no payment.

We were ready to retrace our steps, when it struck both Aunt Jane and me that one hill looked so exactly like the other, that we had not the slightest idea by which hill-side to go, in order to reach home. Our perplexity interpreted itself to our hostess, who with gesticulations and strange sounds disappeared behind her house, and returned speedily followed by a grim tall husband, with courtly manners and very black hair, who slowly, but in tolerable English, offered to show us the way to the Lodge. We accepted gratefully, and he strode beside us, along a sheep-trodden path in silence. It was not the route by which we had come; and we arrived presently at a broad, rapid, though shallow stream, full of rocks and pools. How were we to cross it? we had not even galoshes!

Aunt Jane and I reproached our cicerone.

'How in the world,' we said, 'are we to get over? we shall wet our feet!'

The Highlander looked earnestly at Aunt Jane, and put the little black pipe out of his mouth into his pocket, moved a step or two forward, and then without a word—but with a sudden dexterous toss—he hoisted her on his back, strode into the water (unheeding her frantic screams, and the clutches Auntie made at his throat and ears), and deposited her safe on the opposite shore.

I shuddered—in spite of my irrepressible laughter—when I thought that, in like manner, I must be shouldered and borne aloft by that grim knight; but Aunt Jane threatened from the other side to disinherit—to disown me, if I ventured to take off my shoes and stockings; and

she adjured me by all I held most forcible to resign myself, and to hold tight. Well, dear, I *did*.

We were in the middle of the stream—he was in the act of stepping from one stone to another, when over his head, from my high position, I descried close to Aunt Jane—walking up to her in fact—a tall figure—a Highlander. Sarah Jane, it was The Macshneishan!

Had I not told you how, by a strange coincidence, we discovered that his moor and ours were contiguous—marched together, as they say hereabouts? Had I told you that in the *tenderest* manner he had said, 'It would be no wonder if we were to meet again?' and now—to meet thus! What could I do? I screamed, 'Let me go! I kicked, I struggled, the shepherd tottered forward, and dropped me into a pool, clutching as long as he could at my petticoat. Can words describe the scene or my feelings? There I stood, dripping, draggled; my hat floating round and round in a small whirlpool, beyond me; Aunt Jane scolding, and stretching her parasol at me; the shepherd with one hand outstretched to catch me, the other holding on to a bunch of heather on the bank! I will draw a veil over this too-harrowing picture. Suffice it to say, I got out, and walked with streaming boots and a battered hat home to the Lodge.

And The Macshneishan!

My dear, The Macshneishan was *very rude;* he didn't attempt to help me; he laughed quite loud, and swung himself about, and was horrid! And only think what we have found out!—he is not a chief at all—he is a shopkeeper, 'a weaver boddie,' our shepherd told us, with great scorn; he has neither a clan, nor a castle, nor a badge, nor anything!

I have caught a dreadful cold in my head. My 'Balmorals' turn up at the toes like Chinese boots, and are quite spoilt, and I lost my eagle's feather. I have knocked all the skin off my knees, and broken my 'cage' with tha

nasty ladder. Charlie has got rheumatism from *wearing bare legs*, and Aunt Jane and I vote Bayswater far preferable to the Highlands.

Ever, dear Sarah Jane, your affectionate but saddened

DELIA MIDDLESEX.



SALMON-SPEARING.

Hei mihi præteritum tempus! That is, the past time wh new Fishery Laws did not forbid, and we young sport men might combat the salmon in his own element, arme like the Retiarius, with a trident, but, unlike him, witho a net. Ill-omened word! is it not to thee that the inte dict is owing?—blockading the mouth of every river wi thy cowardly meshes, only withdrawn for the bare minimum of hours out of the twenty-four to give fr passage to the home-sick fish and lusty grilse to re-see the dear old pools of his birth. For the grace now e tended, and the check put upon the rapacious suppliers Billingsgate and Leadenhall, we shall ever be grateful t the Commissioners, even though the same powers th have removed the stake-nets have prohibited the use the spear, whose operation, as numbered amongst th things past, we purpose to record.

And first for the science of the sport. Salmon-spea ing, as we used to perform it, was of two kinds. Firs that by day; second, that by night. For the first, w choose that day when the more noble art of the rod an fly would be exercised in vain—a clear sunny day, wit as little ripple as possible, and the water low, the field operation being generally the upper pools, or, in prefe ence, the larger 'burn' or mountain-stream whence th river took its source.

The implements, a spear, or rather iron trident of thre prongs, barbed like a fish-hook, the prongs being abo two inches apart, with a shaft some ten feet in length; tw

or three long poles, whose uses will be seen presently, and either a 'gaff' or a landing-net. The essentials, a hawk-like keenness of eye sharpened by long practice, a goat-like agility amongst rocks and stones, and a philosophical indifference to all such minor discomforts as a complete wetting and a frequent fall or bruise. The night-work differed in the change of locality, the favourite spot being the long shallow 'reach' at the river's mouth, and in the substitution of fir-torches for the poles of the day's programme. Thus much for the nature of the sport; for a description of it let the reader lend a kindly ear while we suppose the scene by the banks of the river Arkail, in the Northern Highlands of Scotland (a name which, by the way, he will in vain try to establish in the best of educational atlases or tourists' guides).

'What a baking day! No use taking out the dogs; there's not a breath of scent along the whole hill-side; and one might as well try to fish in a tub as throw a line over the looking-glass-like pools to-day. What's to be the order of the day, Frank? I think I shall take a walk up to the top of Ben Voil and "spy" if there are any deer lying near the ground.'

'I don't think you can do better. We have already planned a foray with the spear in the Upper Pools; but you don't care about that sort of work; so good luck to you, and adieu for the present. I suppose you'll take Stuart with you?'

Even as he spoke a cheery voice outside had summoned Frank, warning him that his set were waiting; so, with a parting remembrance from Charles Marston, the eldest of our party, and the tacitly-acknowledged head, to 'mind and "crimp" your fish directly you get him out of the water,' Frank Gordon hastened to the gravelled square in front of the lodge, and found his brother amongst a group of keepers and 'gillies,' who, by the arms they bore, gave sufficient evidence of their intended occupation.

With the exception of a 'forester,' Hugh Ross, who, l virtue of his position and his long Gaelic descent, pers vered in the traditions of his ancestors, and robed h limbs in a kilt of homespun tartan, the rest of the sport men were clad in knickerbockers, master and man alik And now they were off, and making down the 'brae' wi the long dropping action which marks the practical mou taineer, being greeted as they passed the kennels by th most dismal howling from the dogs, who evidently di not comprehend that spears were not guns, and that the were occasions, such as salmon-spearing, on which the services might be dispensed with, and who further inte preted the volley of mingled Gaelic and Sassenach ejac lations hurled at them as a command to increase the note from *forte* to *fortissimo*, a proceeding accordingl executed with the most painful exactness which th canine intellect could suggest.

A short half-hour's walk, and the hollow moaning of waterfall told of the journey's end. Brushing through small birch-wood that clothed the high banks of th stream, our party stood on the edge of a sheer rock abo thirty feet high, and, looking down on the scene of the intended operations, assigned to each his post and dut A long, narrow, black pool, shallowing towards the ta into a rushing stream, dashing madly against the boulde scattered at random in its course; the rocks rising stee and bare on either side, but fringed on their summits wit the drooping birch-trees and overhanging heather nestlin round the delicate little ferns and rock-plants that peepe timidly out here and there; and away at the head of th pool, the finishing charm of the lovely spot, the tumblin waterfall, which ever filled the air with its clamoro voice, and beat the red waters below into a mad whirl eddies and bubbles and leaping foam. Truly as sweet picture as Nature ever limned, which, had it been a fe degrees farther south, might have been an unfailing tra

for excursionists to expend their savings on a 'pack' in a covered carriage, and a cheap ride *uninsured*, or might have had its heath-covered banks dotted with picnic parties, and its waters sweetened with the chicken-bones so deftly thrown by the playful Miss Holiday; but being, alas, poor Monar—only one of many such scenes in the bosom of the Highland hills, *all* inaccessible by steam or jaunting-car—it must e'en remain unknown, save to the privileged few, who now looked at it with the less noble view of how they might draw a fish from its black depths.

'Ah, wunna ye look at him? Hech, doon he comes; ye maun e'en try again, my bonny mon.'

This address was called forth from honest Sandy Macgregor, one of the gillies of the party, by the sight of a salmon leaping at the falls, but who, having failed to clear them, hit with a heavy whack against the rock, and, with a vain wriggle and struggle, fell back into the pool beneath.

'You may see more of him yet, Sandy,' said Alick Gordon, the elder of the brothers, 'if meanwhile you will try and get me a little gravel.'

A few minutes, and Sandy returned, bringing his cap full of sand and small stones, which Alick, taking, threw in handfuls down the pool, close by the edge of the rock. The result of this mysterious proceeding, being closely watched by the group, was announced by a general murmur of satisfaction as, almost straight beneath them, a string of bubbles rose to the surface of the stream and floated idly away. (For the benefit of those who have never seen this piece of fishing-craft, we may explain that, as a fish is lying at the bottom with his head up stream, allowing the water to run into his mouth and out through his gills—his mode of breathing—some of the gravel as it sinks down enters his mouth, and, as the fish ejects it, he sends up a few bubbles, which mark the spot he is lying in.)

'Is that your friend, Sandy?' cried Alick, on seei the success of his device. 'You ought to know him you saw him again, so come along down here with me

Away went the speaker to the farther end of the pc where, by scrambling and swinging, he managed to himself down the rock, and plunged knee deep into t rapids. Closely followed by Sandy, he made his way wards the deep water, keeping close beneath the hi bank, where he knew that, at about the depth of his wai a small ledge ran along the rock which would afford h a footing. Quietly and carefully he arrived at the sp where the bubbles had been seen to rise; and telli Sandy to hold him round the waist, as he stood besi him on their precarious footing, he took off his cap, a holding it over the water so as to throw a shade in whi the smallest objects at the bottom of the stream we visible to his practised eye, he bent down, and began long and wary search. One unaccustomed to the wo might have looked till nightfall without seeing more th the changing lights and shadows playing over the dee sunk stones; but Alick's experience soon showed him long black object, like a shade, lying close by the ro and in about nine feet of water. Having satisfied hims as to the exact position of his treasure-trove, he shout a warning to the group above, and told Sandy to take look.

'Ah, the big blackguard!' whispered the gillie, as lifted his dripping face after his subaqueous search. 'Ha a care, Mister Alick, and give him the point well over t shouther.'

'Hold up tight then, Sandy, and give a shade wi your cap as I tell you. That's right; no, a little furth out—now then, steady!'

As he spoke, Gordon was slowly letting down t spear a little behind the salmon, till, when it was about foot above the fish, he paused, and braced himself for t

stroke his left hand grasping the spear about halfway down, to guide the aim, and the right hand holding it near the top to give the blow, while his face was nearly buried in the water, as he kept his eye on his prey.

'Further out yet with the cap, Sandy. Now, hold on!'

Down shot the spear: for one instant the shaft shook violently as the struck salmon struggled beneath the weight which was pinning it to the bottom, and the next, with a loud splash and flurry, the strong fish bore to the surface, and shaking himself off the barbs, dragged Gordon still holding on to the spear, headlong into the pool.

A loud shout from the watchers on the top of the precipice greeted this 'coup,' and on the gillie who had been posted near the bottom of the pool announcing that 'the fish had ne'er come his way,' all those who had, up to this time, been mere passive spectators, made the best of their way down the rocks, to take their part in the coming struggle.

With a few strokes, Alick gained the shallows at the tail of the pool, and as the stream divided into two chief courses, himself commanded one with his spear, and deputed the other to Hugh Ross. Meanwhile, Frank was directing the gillies, who were 'poking' the fall and deep water with the long poles we mentioned, a proceeding intended to drive any fish that might be lying about there down to the lower end of the pool, where they would meet the spearmen, or else to take refuge behind the big rocks and boulders, where they might be discovered afterwards. All was noise and eagerness, save with the two spearmen, who, silent as statues, were keenly watching the few yards of clear water in front of them, ready to spring into life the moment they detected the approach of a fish. And as Hugh Ross looked, a black shadow of a sudden swept down with the current before him, and as he moved a step to meet it, whisked away, and shot past

him with the arrow-like speed which a salmon, bette than any fish that swims, can command; but the activ Highlander was a match for the occasion, and with a dex terity which must be seen to be appreciated, gave a back ward spring, and struck sharp down with his spear a gooc two feet in front of his mark; and as he held the strug gling fish down by bearing with his whole weight on hi weapon, the shaking shaft told of the good quarry he hac secured. With a wild shout of triumph, Alick rushed tc the rescue, and throwing himself down in the water seized the salmon under the gills, and quickly bore him tc land, where Marston's injunction was acted upon, and the crimping-knife brought into play.

'Ye took a good shot, too, Mister Alick,' said Hugh Ross, looking at the wound behind the head which Gordon had given; 'but he was a clean-run fish, and as full o life as a stag in August; and I'm thinking he will no have joost right justice at fifteen pounds' weight.'

'I'd be sorry to carry him at that weight, Hugh, answered his master. 'But all the merit belongs to you for little should we ever have seen of him again but fo that flying shot of yours. However, there he is, and a beautifully-shaped fish too; so tie him up, and let's carry him off to the house, where you'll get glory enough from both Mr. Marston and the cook. Come along, Frank.'

So saying, Alick marched away, followed by the res of the party. On arriving at the lodge, they found tha Marston had not yet returned; so it being yet early in th day, they debated as to the best method of employing th time yet left them; and as the bright still weather effec tually negatived all propositions of going after grouse o taking a cast with a fly in any of the Upper Pools, th suggestion of Hugh Ross, who had become unusually kee after his triumph of the morning, to rest till the evenin and then make a night of it with the spear at the mout of the river Arkail, was unanimously adopted. There wa

a good thirteen miles' walk over the hill between the lodge and the intended scene of the night's operation, but our hardy young sportsmen regarded that only so far as to order their dinner at an earlier hour than usual, so as to start in time in the evening, and employed the intervening time in tying up bundles of fir-splinters to make torches, and in providing themselves with dry suits of clothing, after the wetting they had just received.

Shortly before seven o'clock they were ready to start, and having left a note for Marston, who had not yet returned from the hill, they set out, following Hugh Ross in single file, as he led the way over the darkening moor. All were too well accustomed to the work to come to much grief over the broken ground, beyond an occasional stumble or sudden fall as the foot slipped into an unseen hole in the moss; and before long the autumn moon rose full and bright to light their way, promising an idle time of it to the torches, which some of the gillies bore patiently on.

It was not yet eleven o'clock when the sportsmen stood on the banks of the Arkail, looking happily across the broad river, which flowed musically over its shallow bed, showing almost clearer in the silver radiance of the moon than in the dazzling splendour which lit it up during the day; but across on the opposite bank the trees which fringed its sides stood out black and heavy as a wall of rock.

'What a glorious night!' exclaimed Alick, as the scene first burst upon him. 'Look, Frank, away over there where the river runs into the Firth; that bit of it you see by the farthest corner gleams like a sheet of pure silver, and the Inch-na-coul hills look as if they were touched with hoarfrost. Isn't it pretty? and what a night for us! Come on, Hugh and Sandy there, let's be getting to work, but warm the cockles of your heart first with a drop of whisky. Here, try my flask, Hugh. That's right—

the same to you, thanks, and good luck to us both,' as t forester drank his young master's health; 'and I thin shall stay about here with Mr. Frank, if you will g little lower down and post the boys, and tell them to k a sharp look-out, and mind and "hollow" in time; an say, Donald there, don't you be giving us any stones fish to-night, you rascal.' (This was in reference t false alarm raised on a previous occasion by the unhap Donald, who had mistaken the ripple caused by a st lying in the way of the stream for the wake made b travelling salmon, and had given notice accordingly: a while here, we may explain that the *modus operandi* salmon-spearing by night is to post watchers down t bank at regular intervals, who on seeing the wake o fish going steadily up stream—and remember that salm only travel or run up a river at night—shout to the spe men above to give notice, who, being put on the al wait till they also see the little wave which marks th prey, and then walk into the river to meet it.)

Away went Hugh and his subordinates, leaving t brothers to choose their own positions; and as Al walked off announcing his intention of crossing the ri and taking one of the gillies with him to command t opposite side, Frank remained alone gazing at the r ning stream before him, and taking stock of all the ripp and eddies caused by the larger stones in the bed of t river, so that in the heat of the moment, when instan expecting the salmon of which notice might have b given, he might not fall into Donald's error, and confo the inanimate with the living agent. The witching s ness of the night, broken only by the monotonous gurgli of the running waters and the soft whispering of the tre before long lulled the young watcher into a state of se consciousness, in which he sat with open eyes staring f ward into the space before him, with a dim remembra that he was looking out for salmon, and that the wh

flood beneath him was a river and the appointed subject of his closest observation; but a whole shoal of salmon might have passed and dubbed him wisest of men for the blissful ignorance he would have manifested of their presence, had not a sudden shout of 'Mark!' roused him from his somnolence and recalled his wits to full life and activity. With ear and eye painfully alert, he heard the shout taken up by the next gillie, and the sound of his feet over the gravel as he ran along the river's side to keep his prey in view; then the noise of some one cautiously wading out in the water, a sudden rush and splashing, and the next minute a clamour of voices, amongst which he could discern that of Hugh Ross calling for a light; and as he looked far down the stream he saw a torch coming down the bank and borne into the river, and the flare of the smoking pine-wood showed him a dark group standing in the water, and for one moment he fancied he saw the gleam of a fish being lifted out; and then, as the group retreated to the bank, he again distinguished Hugh's voice good-humouredly depreciating his own prowess, by proclaiming the unimportance of his capture, which was 'joost a sma' grilse, and no worth the mentionin', and it were not for makin' up the number.'

The commotion created by this incident had barely subsided, when again a sharp cry through the stillness of the night announced the approach of another fish, and again Frank heard the warning taken up by one watcher after another, when, as he stayed expecting each instant to hear Hugh anticipate him in the encounter, his eye caught a moving ripple in the water, a small advancing wave tailing into a broad wake, and with a wild feeling of excitement he dropped into the river and waded carefully in to meet it: he was yet six or seven yards above it, as he stood nervously grasping his spear, and still he stood motionless as a statue, till the wave washed up close beside him, when sharp and sudden he launched out his

spear—swish!—and the iron rattled on the pebbles in the river, as the salmon dived down beneath the blow which had grazed its back, and shot away up the stream.

'Alick, Alick, come here, I'm sure I struck it!' shouted the eager boy, as he rushed headlong after his prey, ever and anon tripping over a stone and falling with a loud splash into the shallow water, which for more than a mile from the mouth of the Arkail was rarely more than three feet deep; but though he every now and then fancied he saw the salmon's wake still bearing on before him, he ran to little purpose but to cover himself with wounds and bruises from head to foot, and was on the very point of giving up his fruitless chase, from sheer exhaustion, when a cry from his brother, sounding ahead of him, urged him on, and as he turned a corner round which the river swept in a sharp curve, he came upon Alick standing near the bank and pinning something down with his spear to the bottom of the water. 'Go down and get him under the gills, old boy,' was his brother's greeting, as Frank stumbled breathlessly up; 'he's a regular monster, and will take you all you know to carry him in; but I think he's your friend, and he will count as yours, if we find your mark on him. "First spear" always counted in the Sunderbunds' (a precedent advanced by the speaker from his reminiscences of pig-sticking in Lower Bengal).

'There it is then, Alick,' said Frank, as he laid the fish down on the river's bank and pointed to a jagged cut a little behind the dorsal fin. 'I did not allow enough in front, and should never have seen him again but for you; but isn't he a thick fellow, and I can answer for his weight already. I shouldn't care about carrying him to the lodge, I know; but I suppose we had better take him back to the others, so we may tie him up, if you have a bit of string with you. Thanks,—that will do capitally.'

Reader, I hope we have not failed by this time to give you an insight into the mysteries of a sport which, though

now defended by stringent penalties, was no unworthy one in its time, requiring, as it did, the utmost dexterity, training, and endurance: three objects which in themselves are sufficient to elevate any pursuit which can promote them, and which many seek to acquire amongst the mountains of Switzerland or the hills of Scotland. In a lesser way, after the fatigues of the London season, the gentler sex strive to attain the same end by walking, riding, sailing, or otherwise recruiting with fresh country air.

CARPE DIEM.



HEN one gets ever such
little older, one gets ver
much more disinclined t
take much trouble, muc
physical trouble that i
about hobbies which onc
were ridden to death.
few years ago it was
pleasure to get up at tw
o'clock in the mornin
and have six hours' fish
ing before it became ne
cessary to get to work a
Blackstone and Chitt
and the endless writin
of 'common forms;' no
I prefer keeping within the sheets until breakfast-tim
and leaving fishing expeditions for legitimate holiday
So that, as holidays are not very frequent, and ofte
necessarily taken up in other ways, and as fishing st
tions are distant, and not easily accessible, my hand is i
danger of forgetting its cunning in wielding a fishin
rod. I do not so much miss my favourite sport, unt
in an unfortunate hour, I get hold of a book of anglin
reminiscences, of which there are plenty, and reading i
its pages vivid descriptions of days by the riverside, suc
as I used to experience myself, my fancy sets to wor

and, aided by memory, conjures up such delightful visions that at last I cannot sit still; the room, ay, and the town, seem to stifle me, and I long for a glorious ramble, rod in hand, as much as I ever did.

Following close upon the perusal of such a book, and the feelings awakened by it, I was pleased beyond measure to find myself possessed of a few days of leisure, and once more in the bonny border land of Wales. I took care to make the most of my time, and seize the opportunity of renewing my acquaintance with some of those charming spots with which, as an angler and a writer, I had in times past identified myself.

One day I spent in tracing the wanderings of the burn whence a lusty trout had been transferred to my pannier. Another afternoon I set out for a carp pool, not *the* carp pool *par excellence* of our boyish days, but one nearly as good, where I had caught some six-pounders years ago. I walked to the place—it was two miles and a half away—burdened with three rods and a huge bagful of worms, intent upon slaughter. I neared the field, I crossed the hedge. I stood still and gazed in astonishment. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. *There was no pool there.* I walked round the field and across the field, which was strewn with clumps of rushes. A peewit had laid four eggs on the very spot, as I calculated, where I had hooked my biggest carp. A small boy hove in sight. I seized him, and asked him where the pool had gone. He answered, 'Whoy, mun, it ha' been drained dry these three years.' I sat upon a gate and smoked four cigarettes, then walked home, my rods feeling twice as heavy as when I came that way.

I was to be recompensed, however, for my disappointment by a day at the carp pool on the hill at Craigyrhiw, Coed-y-gar, or Penycoed, for it goes by all three names, the first being the most proper. By accident I met an old friend from a distance, who, when he heard where I

was bound to, offered to accompany me. I was glad o his companionship for more than one reason. He ha affected to disbelieve my accounts of the big fish to b caught there, and this was an opportunity of vindicatin myself from the charge of exaggeration. He got hi rods and we started, pausing on the way to get a coupl of small Melton Mowbray pies for lunch. My friend whom I shall call A., left the commissariat department t me, and I, having just had a good breakfast, did not con template the possibility of becoming very hungry durin the day, so considered we should have quite sufficient t recruit ourselves with. Leaving the town, we passed under the beautiful avenue of limes in the churchyard, musical with rooks and sweet with the spring fragrance, and so on to Oswald's Well. Under a tree at this spo King Oswald fell in battle, and out of the ground after ward sprang water, said to be endowed with healin power. The well is neatly arched over with stone, an has an effigy of King Oswald at the back; but the latte offered too good a mark for the stones of the grammar school lads to remain undefaced. Oswaldestree is no corrupted into Oswestry, or more commonly among th country people, Hogestry or Osistry. Just above th well is the present battle-ground, where affairs of honou among the schoolboys are, or used to be, settled by a appeal to fisticuffs.

Crossing Llanvorda Park we enter Craigvorda woods at once the most beautiful and picturesque of the man similar woods on the borders. The ground is moss underfoot, the trees meet overhead, glossy green fern pave the noble corridors, which have for pillars straigh and sturdy firs and larch, and for a roof the heavy foliag of interwoven sycamore and oak. At intervals the chest nut too lifts its gigantic nosegay of pink and white an yellow flower-spikes, and near it, out of some cragg knoll, the 'lady of the forest,' the silver birk, bends te

derly over the masses of blue hyacinths below. 'The shade is silent and dark and green, and the boughs so thickly are twined across, that little of the blue sky is seen between;' but there is no lack of blue underfoot, for the hyacinths seem to have claimed the wood as their own property, and shine like a shimmering sea of blue between the tree-stems, quite putting out of countenance with their blaze of colour the modest violet, growing by the side of the runnels leaping downward to join the noisy brook.

We crossed the Morda, a purling trout stream, out of which you may easily basket a score of trout in the spring; up a lane, the banks of which were crowded so thickly with spring flowers, starwort, and other snow-white flowers, deep-blue germander speedwells, red ragged robins, and wild geraniums, monkshood, daisies, dandelions, and buttercups, that the green of the leaves and grasses was quite absorbed and lost in the brighter hues; up and up, until our legs began to ache, and at last we came to the crest of the hill, in the hollow a few feet below which lay the tarn, gloomy enough, but weirdly beautiful. The water itself looked green from the prevailing colour of the rushes and flags, and the deep belt of green alders, which grew half in and half out of it all round.

'Look,' I said, 'there are two herons, a couple of wild-ducks, with their young brood just hatched, twenty or thirty coots and waterhens, and some black leaves sticking up out of the water, which are the things we are after.'

'What do you mean?' asked A.

'They are the back fins of carp.'

A.'s rods—he had two, as I had—were put together with remarkable quickness. I took it more leisurely, and watched him searching about for a place to cast his line in, with some amusement.

'I say, how are we to get at the water?' I cried.

'Wade.' But this he was averse to doing. He foun a log of wood, and pushing it out beyond the bushe where it was very shallow, he took his stand upon it in very wobbley state, with a rod in either hand. I too up a position a short distance from him, and we waite patiently for half an hour without a bite. Suddenly heard a splash, and looking round, saw that A. had slippe off his perch, and was halfway up to his knees in wate with a broken rod and a most rueful expression on hi face.

'I have lost such a beauty.'

'Serves you right. You can't pitch a big carp ou like you could a trout. This is the way—see.'

I struck at a decided bite, and found that I was fast i a good fish, which, after a lively bit of splashing an dashing about (the water was only knee-deep, though s muddy the fish could not see us), I led into a little have or pond, where the inmates of a cottage in the woo came to get their water, and lifted him out with m hands—a tidy fish of three pounds in weight. In about quarter of an hour A.'s float moved slightly. He was a excitement directly. He had never caught anything large than a half-pound trout. Some minutes elapsed befor another movement took place.

'He has left it,' said A.

'No, he has not. Don't move; you will get him pr sently.'

Then the float or quill gave a couple of dips; then i a few seconds more moved off with increasing rapidity 'Now strike.' A. did so, and soon landed a carp of tw pounds. From that time we had steady sport throughou the day. Every quarter of an hour one of us had a bite and although we missed a good many through strikin too soon, our respective heaps of golden-brown fish (ver

few of the carp there are at all white) grew rapidly in size.

As we were coming back from a small larch-tree where we had found a beautifully constructed golden-crested wren's nest, suspended from the under side of a branch, A. suddenly clasped me round the middle, and gave me a very neat back throw.

'Hullo! what's that for?' I exclaimed, considerably astonished as I sat on the ground.

'Your foot was just poised over that beggar,' he said, pointing to a big brown adder, which was gliding away like an animated ash-stick.

'Ah, thanks; there are too many of those fellows here.'

We had eaten the two pies, and as four o'clock drew near we got mighty hungry again.

'Just hand me over another pie, old fellow. Nature abhors a vacuum,' said A.

'I haven't got any more,' I answered.

'Not got any more? O dear!' After a pause, 'I *am* hungry.' In a little while longer A. started off, saying, 'You mind my rod while I am away. I am going foraging for food. I'll try and catch a rabbit, and eat him alive, oh! I've been meditating upon those fish, but I don't like the look of them.'

He was gone for about half an hour, during which time I had landed three fish. When he came back he had the countenance of a man who had dined well. He said to me,

'Go as straight as you can through the wood in that direction, and you will come to a cottage where there is plenty of hot tea, a loaf of bread, and some butter awaiting you. I never dined better in all my life, and I forgive you for only bringing two pies.'

I obeyed his directions, and the tea certainly was refreshing, although I could not get any sugar with it.

It was time to be going. We counted our fish. I had

eleven (my usual number at that pool, by the way), a
A. had ten, most from two to three pounds each, but o
or two heavier. We selected the best, and as many
we could conveniently carry, and gave the rest to so
cottagers.

From the shooting-box, which is at the top of the h
and is, by the way, in a state of dilapidation, we had
most magnificent view, one well worth the walk to s
It was a view which embraced Shropshire, Cheshire, Mo
gomeryshire, Denbighshire, and Merionethshire. In t
vividly green valley below us the little village of Ll
silin slumbered, scarcely noticeable were it not for t
dark and massy yew-trees in its churchyard.

From the rocks farther on we saw a pretty sight.
fox was standing on a stone, and on a sloping slab
neath her five cubs were sprawling and gambolling ab
like a lot of Newfoundland puppies.

Presently the vixen trotted off a little way and
down; and while we were watching her a rabbit popp
out of his burrow, and came several yards towards R
nard without seeing her. With one bound fox was u
bunny, and the pair rolled over and over down the h
The captor then slunk off with her captive, not to
young ones, but to a quiet hole in the cliff, to hav
gorge all by her greedy self.

In a hollow tree in the cliff we found three jackda
nests, each with four eggs in; and we were amused
watching a woodpecker tapping away at a tree. T
noise produced was like that made by drawing a st
very rapidly over some wooden palings, and quite
loud, or even more like a watchman's rattle worked rat
slowly. A curious spectacle was presented in the lane
going home. It was a warm damp night, and every do
yards or so a glowworm exhibited its eerie light, a
each successive one seemed to shine more whitely a
brightly than the last.

The day was done, its pleasure seized, and—no, not gone, for a pleasant memory remains wherewith to delight myself, and perchance please my friends, among whom I would fain number all angling readers.



[illegible] before the entrance of little Paul, [illegible] and [illegible] wondrous [illegible] at Dr. Blimber's and seeing the Tu[illegible] and Cornelia and Feeders, and the whole [illegible] of wonders, [illegible] chestnut mind him in the hall [illegible] of his fellow-mad friend. Ask them be sure to [illegible] [illegible] case of Dingeste, if you please. Dingeste was a [illegible] who had never in his life [illegible] a [illegible] and the evidence had to [illegible].

[illegible] after little Dombey had heard what the [illegible] and dried away [illegible] of the [illegible] came that melancholy visit of gentleness to Princess [illegible] the [illegible]. Those who brought with him that [illegible] a dreadful offering. [illegible] He also a large [illegible] [illegible] you must mind that, will you? In that Dingeste was at that moment wearing the ugh the [illegible] of a [illegible] [illegible] which the [illegible] to that spot [illegible] [illegible] encased on a [illegible] [illegible] among the [illegible]. He gave them [illegible] of the side of his [illegible] and [illegible] himself by the [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] that the [illegible] and then up the passage up again, putting out the [illegible] as if he had come [illegible] to a dispensary to be [illegible] for the [illegible]. This, too, was a [illegible] [illegible] or a [illegible] [illegible] there was an [illegible] in the [illegible] [illegible] whom it was [illegible]. The [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] that when he came [illegible] the room that he [illegible] [illegible] and the furniture, and would a long [illegible] [illegible] that dangled from his neck round the legs of chairs and [illegible], and then [illegible] at it until his eyes became [illegible] [illegible].

After this is it wonderful that we should apply the term The Landlords of Fiction to our famous novelist?

'FOR SALE—A THOROUGHBRED NAG, UNBROKEN.'

I.

THE nag was a mare. Father bought her of a sha horsey innkeeper in the neighbouring town, who had h her of a man who had taken her in payment of a bad de of Captain Pumpkin, bankrupt. When she was brougl home, with her foal of three weeks trotting by her sid we all gathered round with the warmest interest. Nobod could enough admire the beauty of the pair. What graceful deer-like creature was the foal! How clean a elegant were the limbs of the mother! ('I could bre 'em wi' my boot,' cried little Bill, with a heroic look, de ing an aimless kick into the air.) What spring and spe there were in that long pastern, and this great muscle the thigh down to the hock! 'And her tail,' remark Sissy—(which did not hang limp and nerveless betwe her hips, as is the habit of most equine and vaccine tai but which had a kind of defiant cock)—'her tail,' said sh standing back, with her head on one side, 'has as fine curve as an ostrich-feather.'

'Well, Joe,' said my father, after smiling placidly on all, observing the old groom standing apart rubbing h nose in quizzical silence, 'what do you think of her?'

Joe put his finger to his cap and came forward. H seized her by the nostrils and the nether lip, and look into her mouth.

'Rising four-year-old, Joe,' said my father.

'Umph!' grunted Joe.

He stepped back, and ran his eye all over her for a moment, as if for something he had lost; then, again stepping forward, he bent down and lifted her forefoot to tap the frog. With a mischievous flash of the eye she turned her head, and seized in her teeth the most obtrusive part of Joe's garment. Joe dropped on his hands. We all laughed; how could we help it? Joe rose in some perplexity, and turned to me quietly with '*She* ain't no good.'

'Rising four, Joe,' said my father, 'and quite unbroken.'

'Umph!' said Joe to me, 'she's out six, if she's a day.'

'He,' said my father, pointing to the foal, who was staring and sniffing at us, 'is a son of Cavalier, Joe.'

'Umph!' said Joe again to me, in an undertone, '*she* ain't no good; an', as the sayin' is, if ye want to know wot 'e'll be, arx his dam, so '*e* ain't no good, nuther.'

II.

ONE day a clever talkative neighbour passed along with my father.

'Ha,' said he, 'a new horse?' stopping and leaning on the paddock-fence; 'a brood-mare, eh?'

'Ye-es,' said my father, getting through the fence, followed by his friend; 'isn't she a beauty?'

'She looks very handsome.'

Then the gentleman rushed at her, hooting and rattling his stick in his hat to make her show off her paces. Away she went at a tremendous trot round the field, with her tail cocked high and her foal galloping by her side.

'She steps well,' said he, coming back to my father. 'A little wide behind; but all the better for that—shows speed. That's a very pretty creature of a foal, though, as swift and graceful as a fawn. Where did you pick 'em up?'

Then my father related all about the purchase, I s pose; for I did not hear, being outside the fence, father not having so loud a tongue as his friend.

'O, *I* know her,' cried his friend; 'she used to bel to Captain Pumpkin.'

Father nodded.

'By all accounts, then,' said his friend, shaking head, 'that *I* have heard—mind you, that *I* have he for I don't swear to their absolute truth—*she's a ho vixen!*'

My curiosity had by this time carried me through fence.

'How can they tell?' asked my father, with the le touch of impatience in his voice.

The fact is, from various dark hints that had b hovering around him for some days, the suspicion beginning closely to press him that he had not made keen, so prudent a purchase after all.

'How can they tell, when she's never been tried?'

'Tried, Mr. Turnham? Lor' bless you! she's b tried—if she's the mare—and gone over two train Davenwick and Mossfoot; and if she's the same, she a bit out of one ear, as if nibbled by a rat, and she ha fore-pastern fired.'

So saying he approached the mare again.

'Woa, lass; woa, little wifie.'

With a toss of her head and a scornful glance of eye she dashed off, but not before we had observed marks on the pastern of the near forefoot—an appeara of tightness, with rebellious little ridges of hair runni from top to bottom, about an inch or so apart.

I remarked to my father that I had observed th marks from the first, but had not understood them.

'Hadn't you better, James,' said he, turning on 1 'go and feed that dog? He's been howling for at le half an hour.'

Thus civilly he ordered me off; and I went.

I was out riding the rest of the morning. When I returned I heard from Joe, while he was hissing over the hot flanks of my horse, that my father had sent the pretty mare with her foal off to a distant field.

'"E 'ad 'er in fust, though,' said Joe, with a wink.

'Well,' said I eagerly, 'and did you see the—the—mutilated ear, and the fired pastern?'

'Bless you, Master James,' said Joe, stopping and looking up, 'I seen 'em afore.'

'Seen them before, and never mentioned it, Joe?'

'Mentioned it, *Mister* James, d'ye say? Now you knows better'n that. You knows 'ow master, your father, does. 'E won't a 'ear uv 'es bein' tuk in from nobody; *but* when 'e *sees* 'e is tuk in, away 'e packs the thing wot tuk 'im in out uv sight somewheres, which 'e's done this blessed day.'

And Joe with a chuckle resumed his hissing and thumping.

'Joe,' I said, after having considered a moment whether I should reveal my ignorance, 'what do they fire a pastern for?'

'Fire a pastern for, Mister James?'

He rose slowly, and began absently to feel for the horse's ribs.

'"Cos it's cruel, Mister James; 'cos the 'oss 'as smashed 'isself some time or nuther, an' it's swelled big, an' they lays somethink over it an' lays the iron on 'issin' 'ot—*that* precious soon lays the swellin'. *That's* wot they does it for, Mister James, 'cos they thinks the 'oss likes it, I dessay.'

At lunch says father to me,

'I don't see, James, what's to hinder you from training that mare.'

'No more do I, father,' I answered, after a moment of surprise. 'I don't see why she shouldn't be managed.

I'll sit her if she don't lie down and roll with me; and if she does, I can stand over her till she gets up again.'

My father looked at me steadily, and demanded,

'Who said she laid down and rolled?'

I looked foolish, and replied that I had heard no one say that—only—

'Only,' repeated my father, waxing warm, getting as nearly angry as I ever saw him get, 'that's how a poor brute's character, like many a man's, is whispered and winked and nodded and hummed and hawed away, before— Take and try her.'

I was overwhelmed with the unusual volume and warmth of my father's speech. I felt hurt, too; but I promised to do my best and gentlest with the mare. But here my mother interposed. The whispers defamatory of the mare that had got abroad had crept insidiously into her busy household ears, and she now, in some anxiety for the life and limb of her firstborn, hinted that it might be better to let an experienced horse-breaker have her first.

'That's just the fault I have to find with these men, my dear,' said my father, 'that they are horse-*breakers*. If an animal shows any will or spirit of its own, they have no thought of trying to bend it—they must break it. If they can't, the horse is a vixen—full of vice—they can do nothing with her. She passes from their hands—or rather from their fists and whips and feet and the sound of their coarse voices—with a mortal dread upon her of any human being, so that it will be difficult, very difficult, for any one to do anything with her, except'—and he gave me a straight kind look (as a peace-offering, I suppose, for the sin of his warm words)—'with the most patient and thoughtful treatment, which I hope—I think James will give her.'

Such words from my father, who seldom spoke either

in praise or blame, sounded to me the rarest flattery. I blushed, and resolved to do my best.

However, I found that in private my mother had prevailed upon my father to let the mare remain unhandled till the harvest was past, by which time, perhaps, her high fierce spirit (if she had it) might have sunk to a very tame ebb on an exclusive grass diet.

III.

In the mean time fresh evidence of the depravity and wide reputation of the mare kept coming to light in a most sprightly irritating fashion. One market-day, for instance, while I was looking on at the sale of some store-pigs, I became conscious that a man, who looked like a respectable groom or coachman, was fidgeting about and eyeing me as if he longed very much to speak, but could not find enough assurance either in his pockets or within his ample waistcoat. Feeling for the man, and seeing no harm in him, I made up to him with some remark about the pigs, with which he agreed. He very soon took occasion to ask if we hadn't that mare up at our place.

'I don't know,' said I; 'we have several mares;' though I was quite sure which he meant.

Yes, yes; but it was that vicious thoroughbred that had belonged to Captain Pumpkin; that was the one he was a-speakin' of.

'O, *you* know her too, do you?' I said.

'Know her? Bless ye, know 'er as well 's I know my own mother! Warn't it me as saw 'er grow up a colt, an' as fust tuk 'er in? You know that mark on 'er ear? she's got a big ear an' a ugly cartey 'ead, too big for her blood. Well, that 'appened when she was fust tuk in, an' was just a-bein' bound wi' the 'alter in the stall, when up she rises on 'er 'ind legs, playin' this yere in the air, a-sparrin'-like; up she rises an' strikes 'er 'ead agin a beam,

an' cuts 'er ear clean off; 'twas just a-'angin' by a rag o' skin. So off I goes for the vet, an' when 'e come we casts 'er, an' 'e sews it on. Ye'll see the marks of the stitches yet, sir, if ye look. Fired in the pastern? I don't know nothin' about that, sir. Very like that was done by one o' them trainers. She went over two on 'em, you know, sir.'

I hinted an opinion that they had not understood, and had bungled her, and that I meant to try her myself.

He looked me up and down in surprise, till I blushed.

'Excuse me, sir, but hes your family insured your life? You'll excuse me, you know, sir,' said he, advancing nearer, 'but she's a spoiled brute. She ain't good for nothink. Kind gentle treatment, sir, do you say? Well, that's just where it is. *If* she 'ad, sir, or if she 'ad 'ad, as you may say. But, ye see, she's been 'ashed and knocked about by them fellers, she 'avin' a devil uv a temper uv 'er own to begin with. Well, ye see, they've come off second best, as the sayin' is, an' she knows it. It's too late, sir; she's got off too long with it.'

'Why, how old is she?'

'How old, sir? Let me—' ('scratch my beard,' he might have said, for that was what he did)—'she was dropped, sir, the year Blenkiron won the Derby; she's gettin' on for six, sir. Well, sir, you *may*, after a while, manage to ride her, but—'

The ellipsis of speech was made fully explicit by a portentous nod.

On our way home from market I retailed to father what I had been told. 'And,' I concluded, 'he said we *might* get her to be ridden, but as for harness—'

'You see, James,' said my father, 'these men have so mismanaged her, that our work will be more difficult than if they had never seen her.'

'Yes; that's just what *he* said.'

'Who said?' asked my father, looking at me keenly.

I felt the rebuke to the full; he needn't have said another word; though he did add, after I stammered in reply, 'The—the man—'

'Do you usually accept as gospel all the gossip you may pick up from this and that creature you know nothing of?'

I was nettled.

'But surely, father, in this case—this gossip—there is a probability—'

He saw I wished to entangle him in an argument.

'Now, James,' said he.

The tone and the gaze subdued me. I was dumb.

It will thus be seen that my father still believed that the mare, notwithstanding the many serious rents and holes in her credit, had something of a character to lose; and he was resolved that, if she could not be rehabilitated with a new one, no one should be encouraged by him to spy and point out other blemishes in the old—not even his son. He seemed determined to stick by her to the last.

IV.

I SAY *seemed* now; but who then would ever have dreamt of reading at Michaelmas in a catalogue of a neighbour's sale the following entry by my father?—'*A Thoroughbred Nag, four years, with Foal; unbroken.*' I was astonished, for I had overheard not the faintest whisper of an intention to sell her. I could not help showing my astonished face to my father. He turned away, explaining the entry by,

'Your mother's afraid of you with her' (meaning the mare).

I submitted to be thus saddled with the blame as gracefully as I could.

But there was no such luck as to be rid of her so easily. She was as well known among the gentlemen

with the knowing little tufts and the tight trousers—ay, and among the farmers too—as any lady who has been defamed is when she ventures into society: she was infamously well known. And she stood in the yard, with her innocent little son, quiet and placable, as meek as milk. It was no doubt to her a matter of indifference who possessed her, if she was left undisturbed in the enjoyment of her small maternal cares, and of the sweetest of grass and other provender.

And, of course, in a little while every mortal man and boy knew her bad points and her vices off by heart. If one man did not know quite all, others (who had never spoken to the man in their lives before) strove for the pleasure of pouring into his ear their gratuitous information. The deuce! it made me quite wroth. Two men were talking her over quite openly. Some little distance off another man was eyeing her with the dubious balanced look of a possible bidder, when suddenly he overheard from the others a derisive, 'Unbroken! ha, ha! Why, she,' &c. They were turning away, when the man in alarm sidled up to them. Did he just—did they know anything of that mare with the foal? Did they? They hoped they did! Ha, ha! I grew more and more angry. Why could they not give the poor brute a chance for her—sale? One of them was arrested in the full flow of imparting all he knew by chancing to cast his eye over his shoulder and observe me. 'Sh!' said he, 'his son!' 'Where?' asked the stranger; and when he knew, he stared at me as if I were a pestilent swindler, till I turned away red with rage and confusion.

But when the old gentleman in green spectacles and white gaiters asked the boy who was standing with the mare whether she went quietly when ridden, and the boy replied, 'O, bless you, yes, sir; why, I rode uv 'er over 'ere myself this morning, an' she went as quiet as a lamb,' I chuckled with delight, though I knew that boy would not.

dare to lift a leg towards her. I, at least, did not register the lie against the boy, it was told in so good a cause.

But the worst was yet to come. Her turn came, and she was trotted out before the auctioneer.

'Now, gentlemen,' &c.

'How old is she?' demanded an oldish nondescript fellow in a wideawake hat and a blouse, who was reputed to possess the fastest trotter in the district.

'Four year old, gentlemen; and quite unbroken,' said the auctioneer, consulting his catalogue.

'Now, gentlemen, what's—'

'It's a lie!' shouted the old fellow. 'She's six, if she's not seven; an' as for her being unbroken—'

But here a sense of fairness and of privilege stirred the breasts of many, who interrupted him with,

'A bid! A bid!'

'Ten pounds!' shouted he.

'Ten pounds, gentlemen. Ten pounds is bid for this thoroughbred mare with foal—'

'Who is the foal by?' asked a voice from the crowd.

'Cavalier,' whispered my father from behind the auctioneer.

'By Cavalier, gentlemen!' shouted the auctioneer.

'It's a lie!' muttered the old fellow.

'Mr. Cross, gentlemen' (that was the old fellow's name), 'is cross because she is not a *cross*.'

Here there was a loud bucolic laugh from the crowd.

'No, gentlemen, she's no cross, she's thoroughbred. There's blood, gentlemen. Trot her out again, Tom.'

Bill cracked his whip, and shouted, and Tom trotted her out, but with little enthusiasm. The bucolic audience laughed, wagged its head, and winked.

'Well, gentlemen, what do you say? Mr. Cross, let me start with twenty.' Mr. Cross shook his sulky head. 'No! Have a catalogue, Mr. Cross?'

'I don't want a catalogue,' said Mr. Cross.

'No, gentlemen, but Mr. Cross wants a thoroughbred mare, with foal, for 10*l.*, gentlemen—a nag that could win 'im a trotting-match. Out with her again, Tom! There, gentlemen, what action and spring! She'd do a trotting-match for you every day in the year, Cross—Sundays excepted. On Sundays, gentlemen, Mr. Cross is too good a man to run matches.'

But it was of no use; he might fire off the most pointed wit he could invent, no higher bid would be thrown to him in return; the crowd grinned and giggled, or stood silent and suspicious. Mr. Auctioneer turned and whispered to my father, and the mare was walked off covered with ignominy.

As we drove home, I ventured a remark, amongst others, upon the unseasonable interference of the old idiot in the blouse.

'I'm pleased she's going to stay with us,' said my father curtly, and gave the horse a cut with the whip.

I could not make my father out; I was silent.

V.

It was November, and the height of the shooting-season, when father reminded me that an attempt must be made to train that mare; had we not better begin at once? I agreed that we had. It was always great trouble to take and halter her. But, for the most part, once in a corner she submitted to be led off quietly.

We tried the saddle on her, just to see how she would wear it; for nothing serious could be attempted till that precious baby of hers should have been weaned. She submitted to the saddle as if she had been under it all her days. She seemed so quiet, I thought I might try how she would endure one seated in the saddle. It was a safe-enough venture for me, for there were two or three men about who had helped in her capture, and father

was at her head. I did not like the glance of her eye as I placed my foot. I sprang into the saddle and stuck, prepared for the worst. But she could not have stood more quietly if she had been made of wood. I walked her up the lane, with her foal trotting by her side, or behind, or in front, and I walked her down again. I walked her about the green, and tried to excite her to a merry prance or two, but no—she was as sober as an old cart-horse. I will confess I felt rather disappointed that she had shown not a spark of the wild devilry that was said to be in her. I got off in disgust. Then I thought I would try a remount alone, she seemed so meek a brute. I had no sooner reached the saddle than she kicked up like a donkey, and trotted off with her beautiful springy step, trying to rub me off against hayricks and stable-walls and fence-posts. 'Well,' thought I, 'this is more promising,' and dismounted the first opportunity.

I shall not trouble you with a detailed account of the weaning of that blessed baby: how he was penned into a large stall adjoining that in which his mother was bound, with a great deal of litter strewed deep about the floor and piled high against the wall; how he screamed and neighed (never have I heard so deep, so fierce a neigh as mother and son both possessed); how to escape his pursuers he leapt up among the piled litter to climb over to his dam—and would have climbed, and broken limb or neck, had I not fortunately been in his rear and seized his tail, and hauled till he rolled over in the litter, and was lost for the moment, all except his thin legs, which fought desperately with the air; how, when taken and securely haltered, he danced and pranced about the green, threw himself down and screamed, once twisting me over with him; how, after he had worked himself into the last state of perspiration and excitement, he leant—absolutely leant—up against me to rest, poor little fellow! He was at length, though nothing like cowed, led away to a distant

part of the farm, and introduced to the company of other colts who had lately passed through the same bewildering experience as himself and had survived it, and who now knew no more of mother or father than does an Arab in the streets. He raced about and screamed for his mother, to the no small surprise and contempt of his comrades.

Parted from her first-born son, that mother led us such a life! If ever there was a real nightmare of flesh and blood, it was she. Three, four nights running, father, Joe, and I sat up with her (all three the first night, the other nights by turns), and if we had not she would have hanged herself over and over again. A very legion of devils seemed to possess her. She neither ate nor drank, nor lay down day or night, but made violent wrenches at her halter (which she broke again and again), threw herself against the walls and on the floor of her stall, like a lunatic. I never saw or heard of a horse behaving so before.

'Lor' bless you, yes, sir,' said Joe, raising his eyebrows, 'at weanin' wuss—much wuss, sometimes.'

Well, I never had seen it; but I was young, and I ventured to doubt whether the mare would not rather die than give in, and whether we were not acting a very cruel part. In expressing as much, I looked at my father; but he stood and smoked, fixed and inscrutable as an Indian chief. Her last paroxysm must have been very violent and peculiar. I was with her on the fourth day alone, and had run indoors to my mother to get a mouthful of something warm, when suddenly there came from the stable the most dreadful clatter and snorting. I rushed out, and found her lying with her tail where her head should be, but with her head still bound to the manger, so that it was dragged over her shoulder towards her tail in a most constrained position; she had one hind-leg over the halter. I saw I could do nothing for her—she must lie there till she could burst herself free. She

made a few ineffectual dashes, kicks, and snorts; then, with swelling ribs and a tremendous snort, she put out her strength. The leather snapped beneath her chin, and she stood with all her feet out apart (as if she meant to fly), and looked about her. Then, with a big sigh, she lay down and was quiet.

VI.

SOON after this, it was possible to begin the work of breaking in. For two or three nights after the weaning and watching my sleep was over-ridden by that mare. In wakeful intervals I endeavoured to mature my green opinions on the best mode of training. I convinced myself by certain links of reasoning, which I lost in my sleep, that the too common whack and halloo—'crack whip and dash away'—method (if method it were) would never do with a creature of her high mettle. I would use her gently. I recalled the saying of an old gentleman, who had been much in the society of horses, that he had often struck a horse, but had never known the blow do any good, and I resolved that under no provocation would I strike her. I sleepily argued with myself that the doctrine of original sin was inapplicable to horses: there was no such thing as inborn vice among them; what seemed such was only either youthful mischief, or ignorance, or, at the very worst, fear.

One evening, in the absence of my father, I flaunted forth these revolutionary notions before a sympathetic but unpractical female audience, consisting of my mother, Sissy, the village schoolmistress (an old maid of prodigious learning and vast powers of utterance), and the old retriever dog. The ladies applauded my humane opinions; the old dog barked and howled as if in dissent and lamentation. Then the lady of prodigious lore, with a delicious roll in her voice, asked Mister James if he had never heard

how it was that man was at all able to restrain and domi nate so noble and fiery an animal as the horse.

Well, I replied, casting about in my mind, perhaps had.

That Nature, in her beneficent wisdom, had so con structed the lens of the horse's eye that a man appeare to him of gigantic size, huge and towering?

'Dear me!' said I, 'I never heard that before!'

'Have you not?' said she. 'It's one of the man marvellous facts science has demonstrated to us. If i were not for that, a small boy like Billy there' (Billy trie to look unconscious, and pulled up his stockings) 'woul never be able to lead about a horse and manage him.'

'Indeed!' I exclaimed.

Here Billy interposed the irrelevant fact that he ha ridden the old gray mare to water and back again, and a alone too.

'No; not quite alone, Billy,' suggested Sissy.

'Well,' quoth Billy, rather sulkily, 'there was only Jo besides;' who, no doubt, was a considerable figure c authority to the gray mare, if not to Billy.

It occurred to me afterwards—keen objections or smar answers never do occur to me till the occasion for thei application has slipped past—that if the lens of the horse' eye had this enlarging power, then everything he sa through that lens—not men and little boys alone—mus be of monstrous size! Why does a horse, then, not ru away when he sees a fellow-horse? Ha, ha! He doe shy, though, when he sees a dark bush in the twilight Can it be that he imagines it a great tree?

However, I resolved to be as big and important in th eyes of that mare as her lens would possibly allow. Bu in a day or two, I must confess, I lost in dignity and sel respect. The mare had run with open mouth at that bo who had lied so well on her behalf. Possibly some mor lens she kept somewhere had a more than nullifying effe

upon her physical, and had shown her him as a very small boy indeed, as a mere worm of a boy. She struck him down with her fore-feet as soon as he entered her box, and she would have trampled him to death had he not contrived to creep away, very sore, under the manger, where he lay beneath her watchful eye till I entered, and found and released him. I tied her up and began to groom her (I had begun thus to make myself intimately acquainted with her temper, and with all her little ways)—I say, I began to groom her. She was rather dirty about the hocks, and I suppose I must have scratched her a little in applying the currycomb there. She struck out a fierce high kick, which just missed me. I instantly dug her in the ribs with the comb. I at once regretted it. She plunged about a little; and I saw from her evil eye and flattened ears she had taken it in great dudgeon. I had lost whatever slight hold I had got of her equine affections; but the worst was, I had broken my resolution at the first trial.

VII.

TO-MORROW was the day when she was to have her first '*plunge*,' as Joe phrased it, and my mother's anxiety visibly deepened.

Why could we not, she urged my father, let her plunge about for a few days with a man-of-straw or a sand-man on her back? She had seen that done at home.

'With a good result?' asked my father.

My mother did not know with what result; but she thought we might try it.

I suggested as a compromise that she might wear a man-of-straw in the night; but my father at once put that aside by reminding me that the mare lay down in the night now, and that if she found she could lie down comfortably with the man-of-straw—(here my father could not

refrain from laughter—whatever at, my mother wondered?) —she would try and lie down with me.

'No, my dear,' said he; 'we must try her with this man-of-straw first,' looking at me and laughing. My father was unusually facetious.

When I was mounted for the '*plunge*'—

'Always a short stirrup,' said my father emphatically, 'when you're on a horse you're not sure of.'

While he on the one side and Joe on the other were shortening the leathers, the mare kept treading and treading (as if she had been in the army and had learnt to mark time), cocking and switching her long switch-tail, till she almost whisked old Joe's withered head off.

'Woa!' cried Joe, 'you—' he felt my father's calm eye on him, and said, 'you bonny Bess!'

'We must cut it off,' said my father.

He meant the mare's tail, not Joe's old head.

But before my father's sharp knife was produced, and while he was still smiling at Joe's mishap, round came the terrible tail on his side and whisked his hat away; some of its loose longer hairs even reached and stung my nose. I believe she knew well what she was about; I could detect the ardent mischief in her eye and the backward prick of her ear. But we soon had her tail abridged to some inches above her hocks.

She trod and trod in her easy springy style, catching at and chewing her bit (it was a simple champ-bit with keys), but she would not step an inch forward in obedience to my mild requests and entreaties. My father, at length out of patience, gave her a smack on the shoulder with the end of the rein he held, and away she dashed. But she found in a little that, what with me on her back and father and Joe with a rein on either side, there was little room for the play of her own free will.

She submitted sullenly: sullenness and design were

always expressed to me by her Jewish cast of nose and long narrow forehead. There are no points so attractive in a horse as an open frank nostril and a broad forehead.

'I don't like that head of hers,' said I to Joe; 'I can't think she's thoroughbred.'

'Thoroughbred? Lor' bless you, Mister James, ye've jest got to twig that carty 'ead to know that; though it wouldn't do,' added he in an undertone, 'to say that to master. No.'

I went to feed her (I always fed her myself). I mixed in a sieve a quantity of chaff and bran, with a sprinkling of salt and two or three handfuls of oats, for we thought that full measure of hard food might make her like Jeshurun. She observed my movements over her shoulder in sullen expectancy. I put it in her manger. She sniffed at it, tasted it, tossed as much as she could out with her nose, and then turned and glowered at me; till, with a sound more like a pig's grunt or a testy man's 'humph!' than an honest equine snort, she returned to her manger and began eating.

'There,' cried Joe, wagging his head at me, 'not she! O, no! Don't you make no mistake!'

After these oracular words from Joe, I resumed,

'I'm sure she and I will never be good friends. She looks so secret, so crafty and designing, there can never be any confidence between us.'

'Ah!' said Joe, looking puzzled.

'I shall never be able to trust that Jew nose.'

Joe laughed, and kept repeating to himself, 'Jew nose,' as if it were a very rich joke.

We plunged and trained her in the soft field the next day, and the third day, and the fourth, and the fifth; and my father said every day with increasing confidence as the days passed, 'I don't see anything about that mare that should make folks say she plays such tricks. She's as docile and good a thing as can be.' I was silent.

At the end of the week she seemed so submissive and tractable that my father thought she and I might very well be trusted alone. I, however, still distrusted the sullen craft of her eye; and that Jew nose, I said to myself, I could never be reconciled to. I saddled and bridled her, with the least tremor of anxiety disturbing me. I was going, for security's sake, to put a curb-bit in her mouth; but father said, 'O, fie, no; you'll spoil her mouth.' So I allowed her the usual champ-bit. She grabbed at it when it was presented to her mouth, as if she understood how near she had been to losing it. I led her out; Joe came forward to hold her head.

'Let him mount by himself,' said my father. 'She must learn to stand without being held.'

She stepped round and round in a staid funereal style, as if performing at a circus. At length I got into the saddle, and, quick as thought, she bolted with me, past Joe, back into the stable. I had just time to think of Absalom's fate before I leant far back over her tail and passed under the low lintel of the door. I was much nettled, but I restrained myself. I got off and led her out again in silence, exchanging with the brute a glance of defiance. She wanted to go through the circus performance again. My blood was rising; I shut my lips and was resolute. I held the rein, but made no effort to mount, till she stopped and looked at Joe, and from Joe to me, as much as to say, 'What does this mean?' Whilst she was considering this, I leaped to the saddle, and away she went, as on the first day I bestrode her, to scrape me off against a fence. Failing in this, she darted forward a few yards into the road, stopped dead, and kicked clear up like a donkey.

'Grip 'old o' the saddle be'ind!' cried Joe.

Again was she disappointed. She whisked her tail smartly and dashed away up the lane, as if possessed by all the devils that drove the herd of swine to commit suicide.

I pulled my very hardest to rein her in; but the champbit could restrain her no more than a rotten stick. 'Well, my pet,' said I aloud, 'go as hard as you can pelt, but I'll stick to you.' Forthwith she began to prance and rear. A gate by chance stood open, and before she was aware I had touched her with my heel and she was in the ploughed field. After plunging and rearing for some time, till I thought the next moment she would fall backward and crush me beneath her, she played what I had been led to understand was her great trump-card—she lay down and rolled. But her feet were clogged with the soft loam, and the action was not so quick but that I had time to get my foot free from the stirrup. I stood over her, as I had promised myself I would. She glared back at me in surprise. She planted out her forefeet, preparing to rise. I was ready; remembering Joe's last words, I grasped the saddle behind me. It was well I did, for with the jerk with which she rose she almost jerked me over her head. She seemed to have expected thus to get rid of me. She looked round and stood still a moment to consider what she would do next. 'Do what I want you to do,' said I, then touched her with my heel, and guided her across the field. She stepped along steadily enough till she reached the farther side. I had begun in my triumph to despise the clumsiness and fewness of her tricks, and to laugh at myself for having looked forward to her playing of them with such anxiety, when she espied under a wide-spreading oak a breach in the wattle-fence between the field and the road, and dashed straight at it, will I, nill I. Again I thought of Absalom, this time with more propriety. Before I could count six we had passed under the tree; a crooked finger of one of its great arms had snatched my hat—luckily leaving me my head—we were down the steep bank, and tearing along the road as hard as she could gallop.

'This is nice,' thought I, 'very nice.'

I must confess I thought bitterly of my father. He had allowed me to be carried off by this brute; he would now be sitting down quietly to lunch at home; but I would lunch at—*where?* The road was straight and firm, and her feet covered mile after mile; while I, hot, tired, and hatless, resigned myself to a Gilpin ride. Ten good miles, through sun and shade, without the interruption of a single turnpike. Up Sharpthorne Hill she slackened pace a little, and I got her danced down the long street of the village of Cripley and into the George yard, twelve miles from home. I shouted eagerly for the ostler, for she seemed inclined to return to the road. A little bow-legged man appeared.

'Had a stiff run, sir?' said he, as he stood at her head and glanced at her lathered shoulders.

'Rather,' said I.

I swung myself off, and walked away to find the inn-parlour.

I lunched off the remains of a leg of mutton the inn-keeper's family had had for dinner. I rested a little, and then, in a hat borrowed of the landlord, walked out to the stables to look at the brute. The little ostler had scraped her down and thrown a cloth over her, and she was munching some fragrant hay as if nothing had happened.

'Come from Captain Pumpkin's, sir?' asked the ostler.

I shook my head and looked at him; I guessed what was coming.

'Not?' said he. 'I thought this yere mare was his.'

'Yes, it was,' I replied; 'but my father bought it.'

'Ah!' said he, with a look which added plainly, 'What a green fellow your father must be!' He added aloud, 'P'r'aps 'e got 'er cheap?'

'I can't say,' said I.

'Well,' said he, 'I thought I knowed 'er. If ye once clap eyes on 'er, you'll easy know 'er agin, you know, sir,'

he continued, with a hoarse laugh; 'this yere ear, and the fired pastern. Woa, tit!'

'Ye-es,' said I, in a tone of dolour, and related to him some of our adventures.

'Ah,' laughed he, getting quite lively, 'she *is* a bad un, ain't she? She's the tippest-topper at badness ever I see. So sly, too. Lor' bless you, sir!'

He seemed about to relate some remarkable anecdote of her history, but thought better of it, and said,

'Don't you wear of yerself out with her, sir. She'll break your neck, or break 'er own, afore she's done.'

'Ah!' said I.

'Ride 'ome on this yere 'oss, an' let me walk 'er over in the mornin'.'

O, no, I wouldn't hear of such a thing. I'd ride her back, though heaven should fall. So I mounted and cantered away. I thought I was going to get her home pretty easily; but at the head of the village she turned and galloped back into the George yard.

Little bow-legs laughed, and asked,

'What will you do, sir?'

'Go in and have a smoke,' said I, 'and try again.'

I went in and smoked a cigar. Then I returned to the brute. I was determined she *should* go home now.

She danced and capered, to the no small dismay and delight of the village children and gossips. This seemed to furnish her cunning head with a new idea; for every time she caught sight of a house or cottage with a child or two about she played off these pranks. Not only so, but she played off again upon me all the tricks of the morning. She lay down and rolled in the road, and managed to give my foot something of a bruise. My patience was entirely gone; I whipped her with a will. She rose, filled with rage and surprise, and tore away home like the wind. When we came to that gap in the fence again, up the bank she shot and under the tree—in

whose branches I left my second hat—and away across the field. Now came her final, her grand *coup*. I rode her straight at the hedge, expecting her to clear it, from the way she took the ground; but she stopped dead, with her forefeet in the roots of the hedge, and over I'd have gone head foremost into the ditch, like a sack of coals shot by a coalheaver, had I not feared some such catastrophe and gripped the saddle, according to Joe's advice.

I got home about tea-time.

'O, 'ere you are! I thought it was all up with you,' said Joe cheerfully.

'Well,' said my father, 'how did you get on, James?'

'Get on, father? It was not the getting on—it was the keeping on!'

'That's it,' laughed Joe.

My father was silent.

I entered the house. I saw my mother had been crying.

'My dear boy,' she exclaimed, 'what a figure! You're crusted with dirt! Where's your hat? Are you hurt much? Get the tea made, Sissy. O, it's a mercy you've a whole bone left in your skin!'

'That you haven't walked home with your head under your arm,' said Sissy.

'I did almost leave it stuck in an oak,' said I.

'No-o!' exclaimed Sissy incredulously.

'I've been so dreadfully alarmed,' said my mother, looking tenderly at me, 'all the day. You've been gone six or seven hours.'

'Five and a half, mother,' said I.

'Wherever have you been so long?'

Whilst I was relating my adventures, my father came in and sat down. When I had finished,

'Now promise,' said my mother, 'that you will never ride that brute again.'

'We-el,' I hesitated, and looked at my father.

'O, he's going to try her again to-morrow,' said he, with a twinkle in his eye.

'I'll go out myself,' cried my mother, 'and shoot the nasty brute, before he shall mount her again!'

'You don't reckon the loss, my dear,' said father calmly, smiling.

'I'd rather lose her ten times over than lose my son.'

'Well, well, my dear, we'll put her down to "The Warren."'

Where she may be seen by any gentleman in want of a 'Thoroughbred Nag, fourteen and a half hands, young, and unbroken,' and unbreakable; for let who will possess her, she has not yet seen the man who can be her master.

FOWL IN THE BAY.

O SIGHT of joy! through sedge and sand I've held my wary
way,
And gain'd the shelter of the rock that marks the mimic bay.
And after all my breathless toil my prize is nearly won;
There gleam the glossy heads and wings beneath the wintry
sun;
There, just in shot, the mass of fowl are feeding by the shore:
My pulse throbs quicker at the sight, as in the days of yore.

Let those who call it shooting stand within the level ride,
While beaters push tame pheasants up in clouds on ev'ry side,
Or seek the sport in Norfolk that relays of guns may yield,
When the driven coveys far and near are crowded in a field:
Give me the shore where breezes salt blow gloriously free,
And brace the limbs that tireless track the dwellers by the sea.

I crouch behind the friendly rock, and watch the flock at play—
What varied beauties dip and dive within the tiny bay!—
The widgeon and the mallard in their wealth of colour vie,
And the graceful teal in timid pairs that dart like arrows by.
O, this is sure the sight that sets the shooter's blood aflame:
A brace of ducks well stalked is worth a hecatomb of game!

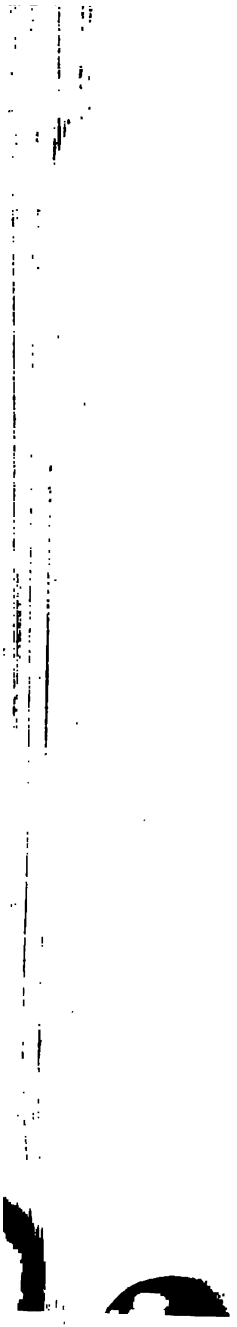
One moment more a breath to draw, and then my trusty gun
Must do the work it oft before triumphantly has done.
Heavy the charge and fair the range, and good the bag will be
If my hand retains the cunning and my eyes the distance see
And never in my memories has Fate bestow'd a day
When a grander chance was offer'd than is now within the bay



Drawn by H. JOHNSON.]

[See p. 302.

FOWL IN THE BAY.



HUNTINGCROP HALL.



'REPUTATION, reputation, reputation! oh, I have lost my reputation!' It was, I believe, one Michael Cassio, a Florentine, who originally made the remark; and I can only say I sincerely wish I were in Michael Cassio's position, and could lose mine. It may be a 'bubble,' this same reputation; indeed, we have high authority for so terming it. But 'bubble' rhymes with 'trouble,' and that is the condition to which such a reputation as mine is apt to bring you; for it supposes me to be a regular Nimrod, whereas I know about as much of the science of the chase as my supposititious prototype probably knew of ballooning: it sets me down as being 'at home in the saddle;' whereas it is there that I am, if I may be allowed the expression, utterly at sea.

When, last November, I was seated before a blazing fire in Major Huntingcrop's town house, and his too charming daughter, Laura, expressed her enthusiastic ad-

miration for hunting, and everything connected with it—mildly at the same time hinting her contempt for those who were unskilled in the accomplishment—could I possibly admit that I was amongst the despised class? Was it not rather a favourable opportunity for showing our community of sentiment by vowing that the sport was the delight of my life, and firing off a few sentences laden with such sporting phraseology as I had happened to pick up in the course of desultory reading?

Laura listened with evident admiration. I waxed eloquent. My arm-chair would not take the bit between its teeth and run away; no hounds were in the neighbourhood to test my prowess; and I am grieved to admit that for a fearful ten minutes 'the father of —— stories' (what a family he must have!) had it all his own way with me.

'*Atra cura sedet post equitem* indeed!' I concluded. 'You may depend upon it, Miss Huntingcrop, that man was mounted on a screw! Black Care would never dare to intrude his unwelcome presence on a galloper. Besides, why didn't the fellow put his horse at a hurdle? Probably Black Care wouldn't have been able to sit a fence. But I quite agree with you that it is the *duty* of a gentleman to hunt; and I only wish that the performance of some of my other duties gave me half as much pleasure!'

Where I should have ended it is impossible to say; but here our *tête-à-tête* was interrupted by the advent of the Major, who heard the tag-end of my panegyric with manifest delight.

'Huntingcrop is the place for you, Mr. Smoothley,' said he, with enthusiasm, 'and I shall be more than pleased to see you there. I think, too, we shall be able to show you some of your favourite sport this season. We meet four days a week, and you may reckon on at least one day with the Grassmere. It is always a sincere pleasure to me to find a young fellow whose heart is in it.'

As regards my heart, it was in my boots at the prospect; and, despite the great temptation of Laura's presence, I paused, carefully to consider the *pros* and *cons* before accepting.

How pleasant to see her fresh face every morning at the breakfast-table: how unpleasant to see a horse—most painfully fresh also—waiting to bear me on a fearsome journey as soon as the meal was concluded! How delightful to feel the soft pressure of her fingers as she gave me morning greeting: how awful to feel my own fingers numbed and stiff with tugging at the bridle of a wild, tearing, unmanageable steed! How enjoyable to—

'Are you engaged for Christmas, Mr. Smoothley?' Laura inquired, and that query settled me. It might freeze—I could sprain my ankle, or knock up an excuse of some sort. Yes, I would go; and might good luck go with me.

For the next few days I unceasingly studied the works of Major Whyte-Melville, and others who have most to say on what they term sport, and endeavoured to get up a little enthusiasm. I did get up a little—*very* little; but when the desired quality had made its appearance, attracted by my authors' wizard-like power, it was of an extremely spurious character, and entirely evaporated when I arrived at the little railway-station nearest to the Hall. A particularly neat groom, whom I recognised as having been in town with the Huntingcrops, was awaiting me in a dog-cart, and the conveyance was just starting when we met a string of horses, hooded and sheeted, passing along the road: in training, if I might be permitted to judge from their actions, for the wildest scenes in *Mazeppa, Dick Turpin*, or some other exciting equestrian drama. I did not want the man to tell me that they were his master's: I knew it at once; and the answers he made to my questions as to their usual demeanour in the field plunged me into an abyss of despair.

The hearty welcome of the Major, the more subdued but equally inspiriting greeting of his daughter, and the contagious cheerfulness of a house full of pleasant people, in some measure restored me; but it was not until the soothing influence of dinner had taken possession of my bosom, and a whisper had run through the establishment that it was beginning to freeze, that I thoroughly recovered my equanimity, and was able to retire to rest with some small hope that my bed next night would not be one of pain and suffering.

Alas, for my anticipations! I was awakened from slumber by a knock at the door, and the man entered my room with a can of hot water in one hand and a pair of tops in the other; while over his arm were slung my—in point of fact, my breeches; a costume which I had never worn except on the day it came home, when I spent the greater portion of the evening sportingly arrayed astride of a chair, to see how it all felt.

'Breakfast at nine, sir. Hounds meet at Blackbrook at half-past ten; and it's a good way to ride,' said the servant.

'The frost's all gone, I fea— I hope?' I said inquiringly.

'Yes, sir. Lovely morning!' he answered, drawing up the blinds.

In his opinion a lovely morning was characterised by slightly damp, muggy weather; in mine it would have been a daybreak of ultra-Siberian intensity.

I ruefully dressed, lamenting that my will was not a little stronger (nor were thoughts of my other will—and testament—entirely absent), that I might have fled from the trial, or done something to rescue myself from the exposure which I felt must shortly overwhelm me. The levity of the men in the breakfast-room was a source of suffering to me, and even Laura's voice jarred on my ears as she petitioned her father to let her follow 'just a little way'—she was going to ride and see the hounds

'throw off,' a ceremony which I devoutly hoped would be confined to those animals—'because it was *too* hard to turn back when the real enjoyment commenced; and she would be good in the pony-carriage for the rest of the week.'

'No, no, my dear,' replied the Major; 'women are out of place in the hunting field. Don't you think so, Mr. Smoothley?'

'I do, indeed, Major,' I answered, giving Laura's little dog under the table a fearful kick as I threw out my foot violently to straighten a crease which was severely galling the inside of my left knee. 'You had far better go for a quiet ride, Miss Huntingcrop, and'—how sincerely I added—'I shall be delighted to accompany you; there will be plenty of days for me to hunt when you drive to the meet.'

'No, no, Smoothley. It's very kind of you to propose it, but I won't have you sacrificing your day's pleasure,' the Major made answer, dashing the crumbs of hope from my hungering lips. 'You may go a little way, Laura, if you'll promise to stay with Sir William, and do all that he tells you. You won't mind looking after her, Heathertopper?'

Old Sir William's build would have forbidden the supposition that he was in any way given to activity, even if the stolidity of his countenance had not assured you that caution was in the habit of marking his guarded way; and he made suitable response. I was just debating internally as to the least circuitous mode by which I could send myself a telegram, requiring my immediate presence in town, when a sound of hoofs informed us that the horses were approaching; and gazing anxiously from the window before me, which overlooked the drive in front of the house, I noted their arrival.

Now the horse is an animal which I have always been taught to admire. A 'noble animal' he is termed by zoologists, and I am perfectly willing to admit his nobility

when he conducts himself with reticence and moderation but when he gyrates like a teetotum on his hind legs, and wildly spars at the groom he ought to respect, I cease to recognise any qualities in him but the lowest and most degrading.

Laura hastened to the window, and I rose from the table and followed her.



'You pretty darlings!' she rapturously exclaimed. 'Oh, are you going to ride the Sultan, Mr. Smoothley? How nice! I do so want to, but papa won't let me.'

'No, my dear; he's not the sort of horse for little girls to ride;—but he'll suit you, Smoothley; he'll suit you, I know.'

Without expressing a like confidence, I asked, 'Is that the Sultan?' pointing to a large chestnut animal at that

moment in the attitude which, in a dog, is termed 'begging.'

'Yes; a picture, isn't he? Look at his legs. Clean as a foal's! Good quarters—well ribbed up—not like one of the waspy greyhounds they call thoroughbed horses nowadays. Look at his condition, too: I've kept that up pretty well, though he's been out of training for some time,' cried the Major.

'He's not a racehorse, is he?' I nervously asked.

'He's done a good deal of steeplechasing, and ran once or twice in the early part of this season. It makes a horse rush his fences rather, perhaps; but you young fellows like that, I know.'

'His—eye appears slightly blood-shot, doesn't it?' I hazarded; for he was exhibiting a large amount of what I imagine should have been white, in an unsuccessful attempt to look at his tail without turning his head round. 'Is he quiet with hounds?'

'Playful—a little playful,' was his unassuring reply. 'But we must be off, gentlemen. It's three miles to Blackbrook, and it won't do to be late!' And he led the way to the hall, where I selected my virgin whip from the rack, and swallowing a nip of orange-brandy, which a servant providentially handed to me at that moment, went forth to meet my fate.

Laura, declining offers of assistance from the crowd of pink-coated young gentlemen who were sucking cigars in the porch, was put into the saddle by her own groom. I think she looked to me for aid, but I was constrained to stare studiously in the opposite direction, having a very vague idea of the method by which young ladies are placed in their saddles. Then I commenced, and ultimately effected, the ascent of the Sultan: a process which appeared to me precisely identical with climbing to the deck of a man-of war.

'Stirrups all right, sir?' asked the groom.

'This one's rather too long—No, it's the *other* one, I think.' One of them didn't seem right, but it was impossible to say which in the agony of the moment.

He surveyed me critically from the front, and then took up one stirrup to a degree that brought my knee into close proximity with my waistcoat: the Sultan meanwhile exhibiting an uncertainty of temperament which caused me very considerable anxiety. Luckily I had presence of mind to say that he had shortened the leather too much, and there was not much difference between the two, when, with Laura and some seven companions, I started down the avenue in front of the house.

The fundamental principles of horsemanship are three: keep your heels down; stick in your knees; and try to look as if you liked it. So I am informed, and I am at a loss to say which of the three is the most difficult of execution. The fact that the Sultan started jerkily, some little time before I was ready to begin, thereby considerably deranging such plans as I was forming for guidance, is to be deplored; for my hat was not on very firmly, and it was extremely awkward to find a hand to restore it to its place when it displayed a tendency to come over my eyes. Conversation, under these circumstances, is peculiarly difficult; and I fear that Laura found my remarks somewhat curt and strangely punctuated. The Sultan's behaviour, however, had become meritorious to a high degree; and I was just beginning to think that hunting was not so many degrees worse than the treadmill, when we approached the scene of action.

Before us, as we rounded a turning in the road, a group of some thirty horsemen—to which fresh accessions were constantly being made—chatted together and watched a hilly descent to the right down which the pack of hounds, escorted by several officials, was approaching. The Major and his party were cordially greeted, and no doubt like

civilities would have been extended to me had I been in a position to receive them; but, unfortunately, I was not; for, on seeing the hounds, the 'playfulness' of the Sultan vigorously manifested itself, and he commenced a series of gymnastic exercises to which his previous performances had been a mere farce. I lost my head, but mysteriously kept what was more important—my seat, until the tempest of his playfulness had in some measure abated; and then he stood still, shaking with excitement. I sat still, shaking —from other causes.

'Keep your horse's head to the hounds, will you, sir?' was the salutation which the master bestowed upon me, cantering up as the pack defiled through a gate; and indeed the Sultan seemed anxious to kill a hound or two to begin with. 'Infernal Cockney!' was, I fancy, the term of endearment he used as he rode on; but I don't think Laura caught any of this short but forcible utterance, for just at this moment a cry was raised in the wood to the left, and the men charged through the gate and along the narrow cart-track with a wild rush. Again the Sultan urged on his wild career—half-breaking my leg against the gate-post, as I was very courteously endeavouring to get out of the way of an irascible gentleman behind me, who appeared to be in a hurry, and then plunging me into the midst of a struggling, pushing throng of men and horses.

If the other noble sportsmen were not enjoying themselves more than I, it was certainly a pity that they had not stayed at home. Where was this going to end? and —but what was the matter in front? They paused, and then suddenly all turned round and charged back along the narrow path. I was taken by surprise, and got out of the way as best I could, pulling my horse back amongst the trees, and the whole cavalcade rushed past me. Out of the wood; across the road; over the opposite hedge, most of them—some turn off towards a gate to the right,

and away up the rise beyond; passing over which they were soon out of sight.

That the Sultan's efforts to follow them had been vigorous, I need not say; but I felt that it was a moment for action, and pulled and tugged and sawed at his mouth to make him keep his head turned away from temptation. He struggled about amongst the trees, and I felt that,



under the circumstances, I should be justified in hitting him on the head. I did so; and shortly afterwards—it was not exactly that I was *thrown*, but circumstances induced me to *get off rather suddenly*.

My foot was on my native heath. I was alone, appreciating the charms of solitude in a degree I had never before experienced; but after a few minutes of thankful-

ness, the necessity of action forced itself on my mind. Clearly, I must not be seen standing at my horse's head, gazing smilingly at the prospect—that would never do, for the whole hunt might reappear as quickly as they had gone; so, smoothing out the most troublesome creases in my nether garments, I proceeded to mount. I say, 'proceeded,' for it was a difficult and very gradual operation, but was eventually managed through the instrumentality of a little boy, who held the Sultan's head, and addressed him in a series of forcible epithets that I should never have dared to use: language, however, which, though reprehensible from a moral point of view, seemed to appeal to the animal's feelings, and to be successful.

He danced a good deal when I was once more on his back, and seemed to like going in a series of small bounds, which were peculiarly irritating to sit. But I did not so much mind now, for no critical eye was near to watch my hand wandering to the convenient pommel, or to note my taking such other little precautions as the exigencies of the situation, and the necessity for carrying out the first law of nature, seemed to suggest.

Hunting, in this way, wasn't really so very bad. There did not appear to be so very much danger, the morning air was refreshing and pleasant, and the country looked bright. There always seemed to be a gate to each field, which, though troublesome to open at first, ultimately yielded to patience and perseverance and the handle of my whip. I might get home safely after all; and as for my desertion, where every one was looking after himself, it was scarcely likely they could have observed my defection. No; this was not altogether bad fun. I could say with truth for the rest of my life that I 'had hunted.' It would add a zest to the perusal of sporting literature, and, above all, extend the range of my charity by making me sincerely appreciate men who really rode.

But, alas, though clear of the trees practically, I was,

metaphorically, very far from being out of the wood. When just endeavouring to make up my mind to come out again some day, I heard a noise, and, looking behind me, saw the whole fearful concourse rapidly approaching the hedge which led into the ploughed field next to me on the right. Helter-skelter, on they came! Hounds popping through, and scrambling over. Then a man in pink top-



ping the fence, and on again over the plough; then one in black over with a rush; two, three, four more in different places. Another by himself who came up rapidly, and, parting company with his horse, shot over like a rocket!

All this I noted in a second. There was no time to watch, for the Sultan had seen the opportunity of making up for his lost day, and started off with the rush of an

express train. We flew over the field; neared the fence. I was shot into the air like a shuttlecock from a battledore —a moment of dread—then a fearful shock, which landed me lopsidedly, somewhere on the animal's neck. He gives a spring which shakes me into the saddle again, and is tearing over the grass field beyond. I am conscious that I am in the same field as the Major, and some three or four other men. We fly on at frightful speed—there is a line of willows in front of us which we are rapidly nearing. It means water, I know. We get—or rather *it comes* nearer—nearer—nearer—ah-h-h! An agony of semi-unconsciousness — a splash, a fearful splash — a struggle

I am on his back, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the saddle: without stirrups, but grimly clutching a confused mass of reins as the Sultan gently canters up the ascent to where the hounds are howling and barking round a man in pink, who waves something brown in the air before throwing it to them. I have no sooner reached the group than the master arrives, followed by some four or five men, conspicuous among whom is the Major.

He hastens to me. To denounce me as an impostor? Have I done anything wrong, or injured the horse?

'I congratulate you, Smoothley,—I congratulate you! I promised you a run, and you've had one, and, by Jove! taken the shine out of some of us. My Lord'—to the master—'let me present my friend, Mr. Smoothley, to you. Did you see him take the water? You and I made for the Narrows, but he didn't turn away, and went at it as if Sousemere were a puddle. Eighteen feet of water if it's an inch, and with such a take-off and such a landing, there's not a man in the hunt who'd attempt it! Well, Heathertopper! Laura, my dear,'—for she and the bulky Baronet at this moment arrived at the head of a straggling detachment of followers—'you missed a treat in not seeing Smoothley charge the brook:

"Down in the hollow there, sluggish and idle,
Runs the dark stream where the willow-trees grow;
Harden your heart, and catch hold of your bridle—
Steady him—rouse him—and over we go!"

Isn't that it? It was beautiful!'

It might have been in his opinion; in mine it was simply an act of unconscious insanity, which I had rather die than intentionally repeat.



'I didn't see you all the time, Mr. Smoothley; where were you?' Laura asked.

'Where was he?' cried the Major. 'Not following you, my dear. He took his own line, and, by Jove! it was a right one!'

It was not in these terms that I had expected to hear the Major addressing me, and it was rather bewildering. Still I trust that I was not puffed up with an unseemly

vanity as Laura rode back by my side. She looked lovely with the flush of exercise on her cheek, and the sparkle of excitement in her eyes; and as we passed homewards through the quiet country lanes I forgot the painful creases that were afflicting me, and with as much eloquence as was compatible with the motion of my steed—I ventured!

The blushes deepen on her cheek. She consents on one condition: I must give up hunting.

'You are so rash and daring,' she says softly, *very* softly, 'that I should never be happy when you were out.'

Can I refuse her anything—even *this?* Impossible!

I promise; vowing fervently to myself to keep my word, and on no account do anything to increase the reputation I made at Huntingcrop Hall.

THE END.

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